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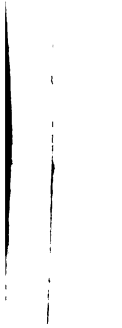
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THE STRANGE
ADVENTURE OF
JAMES SHERVINTON



H.H. Bartlett
29 Oct. 1930





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OF JAMES SHERVINTON**

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AND BEATING MYSELF ON AN UPTURNED CANOE LOOKED OUT UPON THE WIDE EXPANSE OF OCEAN.

[p. 1.

Frontispiece.]

The Strange Adventure of James Shervinton and Other Stories . .

By


Louis Becke

Author of "Breachley, Black Sheep,"
"By Reef and Palm," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE

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CHAPTER I

THE night was close and stifling, and the dulled bellowing of the surf on the weather side of the island told me that the calm was about to break at last, and in another hour or so the thirsty, sandy soil would be drenched with the long-expected rain, and the drooping palms and pandanus trees wave their wearied branches to the cooling trade-wind once more.

I rose from my rough bed of cane-work and mats, and, lighting my pipe, went outside, walked down to the beach, and seating myself on a canoe, looked out upon the wide expanse of ocean, heaving under a dark and lowering sky, and wondered moodily why I was ever such an idiot as to take charge of a trading station on such a God-forsaken place as Tarawa Island in the Gilbert Group.

My house—or rather the collection of thatched huts which formed the trading station—stood quite apart from the native village, but not so far that I could not hear the murmur of voices talking in their deep, hoarse, guttural tongue, and see, moving to and fro on the beach, the figures of women and children sent out to see that the fleet of canoes lying on the beach was

safe beyond the reach of the waves which the coming storm would send in sweeping, endless lines across the outer reef to the foot of the coco-palms fringing the low-lying, monotonous shore.

The day had been a more than usually depressing one with me; and I had had many depressing days for the last four months. First of all, ever since I had landed on the island, nearly half a year before, I had suffered from bad health. Malarial fever, contracted in the gloomy, rain-soaked forests of New Ireland and New Britain, had poisoned my blood, soured my temper, and all but made me an old man at seven-and-twenty years of age. Violent attacks of ague, recurring with persistent and diabolical regularity every week for many months, had so weakened me, that although I was able to attend to my business and do justice to my employers, I felt that I should never live to see the end of my two years' engagement unless I either shook off the fever or was enabled to leave the torrid regions of the Equatorial Pacific for a cooler climate—such as Samoa or the Marquesas or Society Islands. The knowledge, moreover, of the fact that the fever was slowly but surely killing me, and that there was no prospect of my being relieved by my employers and sent elsewhere—for I had neither money, friends, nor influence—an additional factor towards sending me into such a morbid condition of mind that I had often contemplated the idea—weak and ill as I was—of leaving the island alone in my whaleboat, and setting sail for Samoa, more than a thousand miles distant.

Most people may, perhaps, think that such



could only emanate in the brain of a lunatic ; but such things had been done, time and time again, in my own knowledge in the Pacific, and as the fever racked my bones and tortured my brain, and the fear of death upon this lonely island assailed me in the long, long hours of night as I lay groaning and sweltering, or shaking with ague upon my couch of mats, the thought of the whale-boat so constantly recurred to me even in my more cheerful moments, when I was free from pain, that eventually I half formed a resolution to make the attempt.

For at the root of the despondency that ever overpowered me after a violent attack of ague there was a potent and never dormant agent urging me to action which kept me alive ; and that was my personal vanity and desire to distinguish myself before I died, or *when* I died.

For ten years I had sailed in the South Seas, and had had my full share of adventure and exciting episode, young as I was, as befell those who, in the "sixties" and "seventies," ranged the Western and North-Western Pacific. But though I had been thrice through the murderous Solomon Group as "recruiter" for a Fijian labour vessel—"blackbirders" or "slavers" these craft are designated by good people who know nothing of the subject, and judge the Pacific Islands labour trade by two or three dreadful massacres perpetrated by Englishmen in the past—I had "never done anything."

And to have "done something" in those days meant something worth talking about, something that would give a man a name and a place in the ranks of the



daring men who had spent nearly all their lives in the South Seas. Little Barney Watt, the chief engineer of the *Ripple*, when the captain and most of the crew had been slaughtered by the niggers of Bougainville Island, had shut himself up in the deck-house, and, wounded badly as he was, shot seventeen of them dead with his Winchester, and cleared the steamer's decks. Then, with no other white man to help, he succeeded in bringing the *Ripple* to Sydney; Cameron, the shark-fisher, after his crew mutinied at Wake Island, escaped with his native wife in a dinghy, and made a voyage of fifteen hundred miles to the Marshall Group; Collier, of Tahiti, when the barque of which he was mate was seized by the native passengers off Peru Island and every white man of the crew but himself was murdered, blew up the vessel's main deck and killed seventy of the treacherous savages. Then, with but three native seamen and two little native girls to assist him, he sailed the barque back safely to Tahiti. And wherever men gathered together in the South Seas—in Levuka, in Apia, in Honolulu, in Papeite—you would hear them talk of “Barney Watt,” and “Cameron,” and “Jack Collier.”

Should I, “Jim Sherry,” ever succeed in doing some thing similar? Would Fate be kind to me and give r a chance to distinguish myself, not only among fellows, but to make my name known to that ou' world from which in a fit of sullen resentment I } long severed myself?

As I sat on the mat-covered canoe, moody yet f the first squall of rain came sweeping shorewa



the darkened sea-rim, and in a few minutes my burning skin was drenched and cooled from head to foot. Heedless of the storm, however, I remained without moving, watching the curling, phosphorescent breakers tumbling on the reef and listening with a feeling of pleasure to the rush and seethe of the rain squalls as they swept through the dense groves of coco-palms behind me.

Presently I rose, and walking over to my boat-shed, which was but a few yards distant, I endeavoured to close the rough wooden doors so as to prevent the rain from blowing in and flooding the ground. But my strength was not equal to the task, for a puff of more than usual violence not only tore the handle of the door from my hand, but blew me inside the house. Feeling my way in the darkness along the boat's side, I reached her stern, where I was sheltered, and searched my saturated pockets to see if by any chance I had a box of matches, so that I could light my boat's lantern and have a look round the shed. I found a few loose ones, but so wetted as to be useless, and was just about to return to my dwelling-house in disgust, when I heard my name called softly, and a hand touched my knee.

"Who is it?" I said, greatly startled that any one should be in the boat-shed at such a time.

"'Tis I, Niābon, the Danger Island girl; and Tematau lieth here on the ground near me. His master hath beaten him so that he is near to death. And we have come to seek aid from thee."

I knew the speaker, but did not question her any further at the time, beyond asking her if he whom she called Tematau could rise and walk to the house. She

replied in the affirmative, but the injured man was so weak that the girl and I had to support him between us and grope our way over to the house in face of the furious wind and driving rain. The moment we were inside we laid the injured man down, and I struck a match and lit a lamp, whilst Niäbon shut and locked the door, not against any possible intruders, but to keep out the rain and wind. Then, before doing anything else, I went into the store-room and got the woman a change of clothes—a rough, ready-made print gown such as the native women occasionally wear—and a warm rug for the man, who was wearing only the usual *airiri* or girdle of long grass, and then, changing my own sodden garments as quickly as possible, Niäbon and I gave our attention to her companion.

The poor fellow had been fearfully beaten. The whole of his back, arms, and thighs were in a dreadful state, and the rain had caused the wounds to bleed afresh. But the worst injury was a deep cut on the face, extending from the lower left eyelid to the lobe of the ear, and exposing the bone. My surgery was none of the best, but I succeeded at last in sewing up the wound satisfactorily, the patient bearing the pain without flinching, and pressing my hand in gratitude when I told him I could do no more. As for his other injuries the girl assured me that she herself would apply proper native remedies in the morning; and, knowing how clever these natives are in such matters, I attempted nothing further beyond giving the man a glass of grog and a tin of sardines and some bread to eat.

“Niäbon,” I said to the girl, whose face was



and set, "thou, too, must eat and then lie on my couch and sleep. I will sit here and read my book and watch the sick man, for the fever is in my bones to-night and I cannot sleep. So eat and rest."

She shook her head. "Nay, I feel no hunger, Simi,* and I would sit here with thee if it offend not. And then when the cold seizeth thee at the time when the dawn pushes away the night I can boil thee thy coffee."

I was somewhat surprised that she knew that at dawn I usually had an attack of ague, for she lived ten miles away, and seldom even met any of the natives of the village where I was stationed, though she was well known to them by reputation. However, I was too ill and wearied at the time to think anything more of the matter, so after thanking her for her offer to sit up and attend the unfortunate Tematau I lay down on a cane lounge in the room and watched her making a cigarette.

"Shall I fill thy pipe, Simi?" she asked me as she approached me in a manner so self-reliant and unconcerned, and yet so dignified, that physically and mentally exhausted as I was I could not but feel astonished. For to me she was nothing more—as far as her appearance went—than an ordinary native woman, although I had quite often heard her name spoken in whispers as one who had dealings with the spirits and who had supernatural protection, and all that sort of stuff.

"No, thank you, Niābon," I replied, unintentionally speaking in English, "I must not smoke again to-night."

She smiled and seated herself on a mat beside my

* Jim—pronounced Seeme.



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couch, then rising suddenly she placed her hand on mine, and said as she looked into my eyes—

“Why do you speak Englis’ to me, Simi? Who has been tell you I understan’ Englis’?”

“No one, Niäbon. I did not know you could speak English or even understand it. Who taught you?”

“I shall tell thee at some other time,” she replied in the Tarawa dialect, and then pointing to the figure of her companion she said she was sure a smoke would do him good. I gave her a new clay pipe, which she filled, lit, and placed in Tematau’s mouth. He drew at it with such a deep sigh of satisfaction that the woman’s stern features relaxed into a smile.

“My blessing on thee, Simi,” said the man, as he blew a stream of smoke through his nostrils; “in but a few days I shall be strong, and then there shall be but one white man alive on Tarawa—thyself.”

Niäbon angrily bade him be silent and make no threats; it would be time enough, she said, to talk of revenge when he was able to put a gun to his shoulder or a hand to his knife.

“How came this thing about?” I asked her presently.

“The German sent Tematau away in his boat to one of the little islands at the far end of the lagoon to gather coco-nuts, and bade him hasten back quickly. Temat and those with him filled the boat with husked coco-n and were sailing homewards in the night when struck on a reef and tore a great hole in her side. The surf broke her in pieces, and Tematau and the men had to swim long hours to reach the shore.



as thou knowest, the north end of the lagoon hath many sharks, and it is bad to swim there at night even for a little time."

"Bad indeed, Niäbon," I said, with a shudder; "'tis a wonder that any one of them reached the shore."

She smiled mysteriously. "They were safe, for each one had around his neck a cord of black cinnet interwoven with the hair of a sea-ghost. So they came to no harm."

She spoke with such calm assurance that I carefully abstained from even a smile. Then she went on—

"When they reached the white man's house and told him that the boat was lost he became mad with rage, and seizing a hatchet he hurled it at Tematau and cut his face open. Then as he fell to the ground the German seized a whip of twisted shark-skin and beat him until he could bear no longer."

Then she went on to tell me that the unfortunate man was carried to the house where she lived, and she, knowing that I should be well able and willing to protect him, decided to bring him to me. The only difficulty that presented itself to her was that the people of the village in which I lived, though not exactly at enmity with the natives of the north end of the island, were distinctly averse to holding any more communication with them than was absolutely necessary, and a refugee such as Tematau would either be turned back or kept as a slave. For, for nearly fifty-five years internecine feuds had been kept alive among the various clans on the island, and had caused terrible slaughter on many occasions. Whole villages had been given to the flames, and every



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soul, even children in arms, massacred by the conquering party. The advent of white men as traders had, however, been of great advantage to the island generally in one respect—the savage, intractable inhabitants began to recognise the fact that so long as they warred among themselves the white man would be averse to remaining among them, and consequently for the four years previous to my arrival on Tarawa there had been no tribal battle, though isolated murders were by no means uncommon. But owing to the white men's influence an amicable arrangement was always arrived at by the contending parties, *i.e.*, the relatives of the murdered man and the aggressors.

It was for this reason that Niäbon had brought the injured man to my village by a very circuitous route, so as to avoid meeting any of the people. Once he and she were inside my house to claim my protection there would be no further difficulty. She had succeeded in getting her companion into my boat-shed unobserved, and when the storm burst was patiently awaiting darkness so that she might bring the man to me.

That was her story, and now I will relate something of the woman herself and of the white man of whom she had spoken, the German trader Krause.



CHAPTER II

WHEN I first landed on Tarawa, this man, whose name was Krause, according to the usual custom among us traders, called to see me. He was a big, broad-shouldered, good-looking fellow, and certainly was very civil and obliging to me in many ways, although I was an "opposition" trader; and a new man is never welcome from a business point of view, no matter how much he may be liked for social reasons, especially in the God-forsaken Equatorial Pacific, where whilst your fellow-trader is ready to share his last bottle of grog and his last tin of beef with you, he is anxious to cut your throat from a business point of view.

Krause, however, did not seem to—and I honestly believe did not actually — entertain any ill-feeling towards me as a rival trader, although I was landed on the island with such a stock of new trade goods that he must at once have recognised the fact that my advent would do him serious injury, inasmuch as his employers (the big German trading firm in Hamburg) had not sent him any fresh stock for six months. Like most Germans of any education whom one meets in the South Seas, or anywhere else, he was a good native linguist, though, like all his countrymen, he did not

understand natives like Englishmen or Americans understand wild races. He had no regard nor sympathy for them, and looked upon even the highly intelligent Polynesian peoples with whom he had had much dealing as mere "niggers"—to study whose feelings, sentiments, opinions or religious belief, was beneath the consideration of an European. But although he thus despised the natives generally from one end of the Pacific to the other, he had enough sense to keep his opinions reasonably well to himself, only expressing his contempt for them to his fellow traders, or to any other white men with whom he came in contact.

A few weeks after my arrival on the island I paid him a visit, sailing across the lagoon to his station in my whaleboat. On reaching his place I found that he was away from home on a trip to one of his minor outlying stations, and would not return till the evening. Somewhat disappointed at missing him, I got out of boat with the intention of at least resting in one of native huts for half an hour, so as to be out of intense heat and glare of a torrid sun, when Krause's servants came down and said that the wife would be glad if I would come to her station and there await his return.

Glad to accept the invitation, for I was tired out from fever, and ready to lie down where out of the sun, I walked wearily along and entered the house.

To my intense surprise, there came the door, not the usual style of native houses seen in most traders' houses—a go



I SAILED DOWN THE LAGOON TO HIS STATION IN MY WHALEBOAT.

[To face p. 18





woman with a flaming blouse, and more flaming skirt of hideously coloured print, and fingers covered with heavy gold rings — but a slenderly-built pale-complexioned woman of apparently thirty years of age, dressed in a light yellow muslin gown, such as the Portuguese ladies of Macao and the Mariana Islands wear. The moment I saw her I knew that she had but a very slight strain of native blood in her veins, and when she spoke her voice sounded very sweet and refined.

“Will you not come inside and rest, sir?” she said in English. “My husband is away, and will not be back until about sunset; he will be very disappointed to have missed you.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Krause,” I replied; “I think I must accept your invitation, as I feel a bit shaky, and it has been so very hot crossing the lagoon.”

“Very, very hot, indeed, Mr. Sherry,” she said, as she motioned me to enter the front room; “and I know what malarial fever is; for I once lived at Agana, in Guam, and have seen many people who have come there from the Philippine Islands to recruit. Now, lie down there on that cane lounge, beside the open window, and let me bring you something to drink—something cool. What would you like? There is lāger beer, there is very cold water from a canvas water-bag, and there is some hock.”

I gratefully took a long drink of the cold water, and then, instead of lying down, seated myself in a wide cane chair, and began to talk to my hostess, who sat on the lounge a few feet away, and now that I had an opportunity of closer observation, I saw that she was—

despite her pallor and worn appearance—a woman of the very greatest beauty and grace.

It was so long since I had even talked to a white woman, even of the commonest class, that I could not but be insensibly attracted to her, and when in a few minutes she smiled at something I said about my longing to get away to Samoa, even if I had to sail there alone in my whaleboat, the faint flush that tinged her cheek seemed to so transfigure her that she looked like a girl of nineteen or twenty. She talked to me for nearly an hour, and I noticed that although we conversed principally about the Line Islands, and the natives, and of our few white neighbours scattered throughout the group, and their idiosyncrasies—humorous and otherwise—she hardly ever mentioned her husband's name, except when I asked her some direct question concerning him, such as the number of his outlying stations, was he fond of fishing or shooting, etc.

In some way I came to the conclusion that she was an unhappy woman as far as her relations with her husband went; and without the slightest reason whatever to guide me to such an inference, felt that he, and not she, was to blame; and even as we talked, there was unconsciously taking possession of me a dislike to a man from whom I had experienced nothing but civility and kindness. Just as she was leaving the room to attend to her household duties, the man Tematau came to the door, carrying a string of freshly-husked young drinking coco-nuts. At a sign from his mistress, he opened one and brought it to me, and then leaving a few beside my chair, took the remainder down to my boat's crew.



THE MAN TEMATAU CAME TO THE DOOR CARRYING A STRING OF
FRESHLY-HUSKED COCO-NUTS

[To face p 14.



“That is Tematau, my husband’s head boatman,” said my hostess in her soft tones, as she watched him walking down to the beach; “he is so different from these noisy, quarrelsome Tarawa people, that I am always glad to have him about the house when he is not wanted in the boats. He is so quick, and yet so quiet.”

“I thought he did not look like a Tarawa native,” I said, “and I saw that he is tattooed like a Samoan.”

“He has lived in Samoa for a great many years, and is very proud of that tattooing, I am sure. He is a native of Danger Island, a long way to the south-east of this group, and came here about a year ago with a girl named Niäbon.” She hesitated a little. “I suppose you have not heard of her?”

“No, I have not. Who is she?”

“They—that is, the natives generally, and some of the whites as well—call her ‘the Danger Island witch woman.’”

“Oh, yes,” I exclaimed, “I *have* heard of the ‘witch woman,’ but that was when I was trading at Callie Harbour on Admiralty Island. There was a poor fellow there, Harry Willard, who was dying of poison given him by some chief, and I remember quite well his wife, who was a Tahitian, telling me that if the witch woman of Danger Island was near she would quickly render the poison innocuous.”

Mrs. Krause’s dark eyes lit up with undoubted pleasure—“I must tell her that——”

“Is she living on Tarawa, then?”

“Yes, in this village, and she is in the house at this



moment. She would like to speak to you. Do you mind her coming in?"

"Indeed, I shall be very pleased."

My hostess stood at the table for a few moments, with her face averted from me. Then she turned and spoke to me, and to my astonishment I saw that she was struggling hard to suppress her tears. I rose and led her to a seat.

"You are not well, Mrs. Krause," I said. "Sit down, and let me call one of your servants."

"No, please do not do that, Mr. Sherry. But I will sit down, and—and I should like to ask you a question."

She was trembling as she spoke, but suddenly whipped out her handkerchief, dried her tears, and sat up erect.

"Mr. Sherry, you are an Englishman, or an American—I do not know which—but I am sure that you are a gentleman and will truthfully answer the question I ask. Will you not?"

"I will, indeed, if it is in my power to do so," I replied earnestly.

She placed her hand on mine and looked at me steadily.

"Mr. Sherry, you and I have been talking on various matters for more than an hour. Have I, in your opinion, given you the impression that I am mentally deranged? Look at me. Tell me—for I am an unhappy, heart-broken woman, whose life for two years has been a daily torture and misery—what you *do* think. Sometimes I imagine that what my husband says *may* be true—and then I collapse and wish I were dead."

"What does he say, Mrs. Krause?"

"He says that I am mad, and he says it so persistently that—oh, Mr. Sherry, I feel that before long I *shall* go mad in reality. It is only this woman Niabon who sustains me. But for her I should have run out along the reef and drowned myself a year ago. Now, tell me, Mr. Sherry, do you think it possible that owing to the continuous strain upon me mentally and physically—for I am really very weak, and had a long illness two years ago when my baby was born—that my mind has become unhinged in any way?"

"I think, Mrs. Krause," I said slowly and very emphatically, "that your husband himself must be mad."

She wept silently, and then, again averting her face, looked away from me towards the wide expanse of the lagoon, gleaming hot and silvery under a blazing sun.

"I wish that what you say were true, Mr. Sherry," she said presently, trying bravely to suppress her tears, "and that my husband were indeed mad."

She rose, extended her hand to me, and tried to smile.

"You will think that I am a very silly woman, Mr. Sherry. But I am not at all strong, and you must forgive me. Now I must leave you."

"But am I not to see the famous witch woman, Mrs. Krause?" I said half jestingly.

"Oh, yes. She shall come to you presently. And you will like her, Mr. Sherry, I am sure. To me she has been the kindest, kindest friend." Then she paused awhile, but resumed in a nervous, hesitating

manner, "Niāban is sometimes a little strange in her manner, so—so you must not mind all that she may say or do."

I assured her that I should be most careful to avoid giving any offence to the woman. She thanked me earnestly, and then said she would find Niābon and bring or send her to me.

Just as she went out I heard some one tapping at the latticed window near which I was sitting. Looking out, I saw the face of the man Tematau, who was standing outside.

"May I come in and speak with thee, gentleman?" he said in Samoan.

"Enter, and welcome."

He stepped round to the front door, and as he entered I saw that he had stripped to the waist; his hair was dressed in the Samoan fashion, and in his hand he carried a small, finely-plaited mat. In an instant I recognised that he was paying me a visit of ceremony, according to Samoan custom, so instead of rising and shaking hands with him, I kept my seat and waited for him to approach.

Stepping slowly across the matted floor, with head and shoulders bent, he placed the mat (his offering) at my feet, and then withdrew to the other side of the room, and, seating himself cross-legged, he inquired after my health, etc., and paid me the usual compliments.

As he spoke in Samoan, I, of course, replied in the same language, thanked him for his call, and requested him to honour me at my own place by a visit.

Then, to my surprise, instead of retiring with the usual

Samoan compliments, he bent forward, and, fixing his deep-set, gloomy eyes on mine, he said slowly—

“Master, I shall be a true man to thee when we are together upon the deep sea in thy boat.”

“Why dost thou call me ‘master’?” I said quickly, “and when and whither do thee and I travel together?”

“I call thee ‘master’ because I am thy servant, but when and whither we go upon the far sea I know not.”

Then he rose, saluted me as if I were King Malietoa of Samoa himself, and retired without uttering another word.

“This is a curious sort of a household,” I thought. “The mistress, who is sane enough, is told by her husband that she is mad, and fears she will lose her reason; a native who tells me that I am to be his master and travel with him on the deep sea, and a witch woman, whom I have yet to see, on the premises. I wonder what sort of a crank *she* is?”

I was soon to know, for in a few moments she came in, and instead of coming up to me and shaking hands in the usual Line Island fashion, as I expected she would do, she did precisely as my first visitor had done—greeted me in Samoan, formally and politely, as if I were a great chief, and then sat silent, awaiting me to speak.

Addressing her in the same stilted, highly complimentary language that she had used to me, I inquired after her health, etc., and then asked her how long she had been on the island.

She answered me in a somewhat abrupt manner, “I came here with Tematau about the time that the white



lady Lucia and her husband came. Tematau is of the same family as myself. And it is of the blood ties between us that we remain together, for we are the last of many."

"It is good that it is so," I said, for want of something better to say, for her curious eyes never left my face for an instant. "It would be hard indeed that when but two of the same blood are left they should separate or be separated."

"We shall be together always," she replied, "and death will come to us together."

Then she rose, walked quickly to the open door, glanced outside to see if any one was about, and returned to me and placed her hand on mine.

"This man Krause is a devil. He seeks his wife's death because of another woman in his own country. He hath tried to poison her, and the poison still rankles in her blood. That is why she is so white of face and frail of body. And now she will neither eat nor drink aught but that of which I first eat or drink myself."

"How know you of this?"

"I know it well," she answered impressively, "and the man would kill me if he could by poison, as he hath tried to kill his wife. But poison can do me no harm. And he hateth but yet is afraid of me, for he knoweth that I long since saw the murder in his heart."

"These are strange things to say, Niäbon. Beware of an unjust accusation when it comes to the too ready tongue."

She laughed scornfully. "No lie hath ever fouled mine. I tell thee again, this man is a devil, and has



waited for a year past to see his wife die, for he married her according to the laws of England, and cannot put her away as he could do had he married her according to the native custom."

"Who hath told thee of these marriage laws of England?" I asked.

"What does it matter who hath told me?" she asked sharply. "Is not what I say true?"

"It is true," I said.

"Ay, it is true. And it is true also that she and thee and the man Tematau and I shall together look death in the face upon the wide sea. And is not thy boat ready?"

Her strange, mysterious eyes as she spoke seemed to me—a physically weak but still mentally strong man at the moment—to have in them something weird, something that one could not affect either to ignore or despise. What could this woman know of my desire to leave the island in my boat? What could the man Tematau know of it? Never had I spoken of such an intention to any person, and I knew that, even in my worst attacks of fever and ague, I had never been delirious in the slightest degree. A sudden resentment for the moment took possession of me, and I spoke angrily.

"What is all this silly talk? What have I to do with thee, and for what should my boat be ready?"

"Be not angry with them, Simi, for there is nought but goodwill toward thee in my heart. See, wouldst have me cure the hot fever that makes the blood in thy veins to boil even now?"

"No," I said sullenly, "I want none of thy foolish charms or medicines. Dost think I am a fool?"

"Nay," and she looked at me so wistfully that I at once repented of my harsh manner—"nay, indeed, Simi. Thou art a man strong in thy mind, and shall be strong in thy body if thou wouldst but let me give thee——"

"No more, woman," I said roughly. "Leave me. I want none of thy medicines, I say again."

"Thy wish is my law," she said gently, "but, ere I leave thee, I pray thee that in a little way thou wilt let me show thee that I *do* mean well to thee."

I laughed, and asked her what medicine or charm she desired to experiment with upon me.

"No medicine, and no charm," she answered. "But I know that because of many things thy mind and thy body alike suffer pain, and that sleep would be good for thee. And I can give thee sleep—strong, dreamless sleep that, when thou awakenest, will make thee feel strong in thy body and softer in thy now angry heart to Niäbon."

"If you can make me sleep now, I'll give you twenty dollars," I said in my English fashion.

She took no notice of my rude and clumsy remark, though she had good reason to be offended.

"Simi," she said, "shall I give thee sleep?"

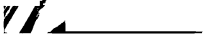
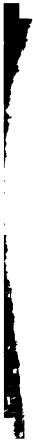
"Ay," I replied, "give me sleep till the master of this house returns."

She rose and bent over me, and then I noticed for the first time that, instead of being about thirty-five or forty years of age, as I had judged her to be by her h



KRAUSE HAD JUST RETURNED IN HIS BOAT, AND MET ME WITH
OUTSTRETCHED HAND.

[To face p. 22.]



clear features and somewhat "bony" appearance externally, she could not be more than five-and-twenty, or even younger.

She placed her right hand on my forehead, and held my right hand in her own.

"Sleep," she said—"sleep well and dreamlessly, man with the strong will to accomplish all that is before thee. Sleep."

Her hand passed caressingly over my face, and in a few minutes I *was* asleep, and slept as I had not slept for many weeks past. When I awakened at sunset I felt more refreshed and vigorous than I had been for many months.

Krause had just returned in his boat, and met me with outstretched hand. His welcome was, I thought, unnecessarily effusive, and, declining his pressing invitation to remain for the night, I left, after remaining an hour or so longer. I noticed that immediately Krause arrived the girl Niäbon disappeared, and did not return.

That was my first meeting with her, and I did not see her again till the evening of the storm, when she brought Tematau to me.



CHAPTER III

WE, Niābon, Tematau and myself, were undisturbed by any visitors during the night, for the storm increased in violence, and, as daylight approached, the clamour of the surf upon the reef was something terrific. About four in the morning, however, there came such a thunderous, sudden boom that the island seemed shaken to its coral foundations, and Niābon declared that the storm had broken.

“That is what the people of the Tokelau Islands call *O le fati le galu*—the last great wave, that gathering itself together far out on the ocean, rushes to the reef, and curling high up as the mast of a ship, falls and shakes the land from one side to the other.”

The girl knew what she was talking about, for from that moment the fury of the wind sensibly decreased, and half an hour later we were able to open the door and gaze out upon the sea, still seething white with broken tumbling surf?

Walking down to my boat-house, I found that the boat herself was not injured in any way, though most of the roof had been blown away. Then feeling that my usual attack of ague was coming on, I retr



to the house, and found that Niābon had made my coffee.

I drank it, and then wrapped myself up in a couple of blankets in readiness for the first touch of that deadly, terrible chill which seems to freeze the marrow in the bones of any one who is suffering from malarial fever. Niābon watched me gravely, and then came and stood beside me.

"Mr. Sherry," she said, this time speaking in English, "why don't you let me give you some medicine to cure you of that fever? I *can* cure you."

"I believe you can, Niābon," I replied; "you certainly mesmerised me when I was at Krause's station that day, and I awakened feeling a lot better."

"What is 'mesmerise'?" she asked quickly.

"Sending any one to sleep, as you did me."

"I can always do that," she said simply, "and so could my mother."

"Can you make me sleep now?"

"Not just now. Wait till the col' fit has gone. And then when you are wake up I shall have some medicine ready for you, and then you shall have no more fever."

My attack of ague lasted about half an hour, and left me with the usual splitting headache and aching bones. When I was able to turn myself, I saw that Niābon was seated beside Tematau dressing his lacerated back with some preparation of crushed leaves. She heard me move, turned her head, and smiled, and said she would be with me in a few moments. Although my head was bursting with pain, I watched her with

interest, noting the tenderness with which her smooth, brown fingers touched her companion's body. When she had finished she rose, carefully washed and dried her shapely hands, and came over to me.

"Give me thy hand," she said in the native dialect, as she knelt beside my couch.

I gave her my left hand. She clasped it firmly but softly, and then the fingers of her right hand gently pressed down my eyelids.

"Sleep, sleep long."

As I felt the gentle pressure of her hand down my face, my throbbing temples cooled, and in a minute, or even less, I sank into a dreamless and profound slumber.

When I awakened it was past nine o'clock, and I found that my own two native servants, who slept in the village, had prepared my breakfast, and were seated beside Tematau, talking to him.

"Where is Niäbon?" I asked.

They told me that she had gone away in search of some plant, or plants, with which to compound the medicine she was making for me. She returned early in the forenoon, carrying a small basket in which I saw a coil of the long creeping vine called 'At 'At by the natives, and which grows only on the sandiest and most barren soil.

"Have you been sleep well, Mr. Sherry?" inquired.

"Indeed I did sleep well," I replied, "and, than that, I have eaten a better breakfast than I for many weeks."

She nodded and showed me the contents of

basket, and then seating herself at the table, ate a small piece of ship biscuit and drank a cup of coffee. It was then that I noticed for the first time that she was, if not beautiful, a very handsome woman. Her face and hands were a reddish brown, darkened the more by the sun, for I could see under the thin muslin gown that she was wearing, that her arms and shoulders were of a much lighter hue, and I felt sure that she had some white blood in her veins. Her hair was, though somewhat coarse, yet long, wavy, and luxuriant, and was coiled loosely about her shapely head, one thick fold drooping over her left temple, and shading half of the smooth forehead with its jet-black and gracefully arched eyebrows. This is as much as I can say about her looks, and as regards her dress, that is easy enough to describe. She invariably wore a loose muslin or print gown, waistless, and fastened at the neck; underneath this was the ordinary Samoan *lava lava* or waist-cloth of navy blue calico. Her gown, however, was better made, and of far better material than those worn by the native women generally; in fact she and Mrs. Krause dressed much alike, with the exception that the latter, of course, wore shoes, and Niābon's stockingless feet were protected only by rude sandals of coco-nut fibre such as are still worn by the natives of the Tokelaus and other isolated and low-lying islands of the Equatorial Pacific.

After making and smoking a cigarette she set about compounding my fever mixture by first crushing up the coil of 'At 'At and then expressing the thick colourless jelly it contained into the half of a coco-nut shell,



which she placed on some glowing embers, and fanned gently till it began to give off steam. Then taking half a dozen ripe Chili berries, she pounded them into a pulp between two stones, added them to the 'At 'At, and stirred the mixture till it boiled.

“That is all, Simi,” she said, as she removed the shell from the fire, and set it aside; “when it is cool enough to drink, you must take one-fourth part; another when the sun is *tu'u tonu iluga* (right overhead), and the rest to-night.”

I thanked her, and promised to carry out her instructions, and then said—

“Why do you talk to me in three different languages, Niābon? I like to hear you speak English best, you speak it so prettily.”

Not the ghost of a smile crossed her face, and she replied in Samoan that she did not care to speak English to any one who understood Samoan, or indeed any other native language. “I am a native woman,” she added somewhat abruptly, “and English cometh hard to my tongue.”

I said nothing further on the subject, fearing I might vex her, although I felt pretty sure that she was *not* a full-blooded native. However, I had no right to worry her with questions, and if she preferred to I thought a native it was no business of mine.

As soon as my medicine had cooled a little, I took first dose. It tasted like Hades boiled down, and made me gasp for breath. Then Niābon bade me wrap me up in all the rugs and blankets I could procure undergo a good perspiration, assuring me that I s



have no more attacks of the dreaded ague after the second dose. Calling one of my native servants, a big hulking native named Tepi, to come and roll me up presently, I first went over to Tematau, and asked him how he was doing, and as I stooped down to examine his head, and see if the dressing was all right, a heavy booted footstep sounded outside, and Krause walked in.

One look at his face showed me that he was labouring with suppressed passion, though trying hard to conceal it.

“Good morning,” I said without advancing to him ; “take that chair over there, please. I just want to look at this fellow’s head for a moment.”

He stalked over to the chair I indicated and sat down, and a sudden spasm of rage distorted his face when he saw Niābon. She was seated at the further end of the room, her chin resting on her hand, and looking at him so steadily and fixedly that he could not but have resented her gaze, even if his mind were undisturbed by passion. Tematau, too, turned his head, and shot his master a glance of such deadly fury that I murmured to him to keep quiet. I rapidly revolved in my mind what course to pursue with our visitor, who, though I could not see his face, was, I felt, watching my every movement.

“That will do,” I said to my patient in the island dialect, which Krause understood and spoke thoroughly ; “lie down again. In a few days thou wilt be able to walk.”

“By God, he’s going to walk *now*,” said Krause, rising suddenly, and speaking in a low, trembling tone. I motioned to him to sit down again. He shook his

head and remained standing, his brawny hand grasping the back of the chair to steady himself, for every nerve in his body was quivering with excitement.

"What is the matter, Mr. Krause?" I said coldly, though I was hot enough against him, for he was armed with a brace of navy revolvers, belted around his waist. "Won't you sit down?"

"No, I won't sit down," he answered rudely.

"Very well, then, stand," I said, seating myself near him.

Then I pointed to the pistols in his belt. "Mr. Krause, before you tell me the business which has brought you here, I should like to know why you enter my house carrying arms? It is a most extraordinary thing that one white man should call on another armed with a brace of pistols, especially when the island is quiet, and white men's lives are as safe here as they would be in London or Berlin."

"I brought my pistols with me because I thought I might have trouble with the natives over that fello there," he said sullenly, pointing to Tematau.

"Then you might have left them outside; I object most strongly to any one marching into my house in that manner you have done."

He unbuckled his belt, and with a contemptuous gesture threw the whole lot outside the door.

"Thank you, Mr. Krause," I said, "I feel more at ease now, so will you kindly tell me the object of your visit?"

"I've come to get that swine Tematau. I pay him. He is my man. I shall tolerate no interference."

shall take him back to Taritai" (the name of the village where he lived) "if I have to fight my way out of this village of yours and kill fifty of your niggers."

"Steady yourself, Mr. Krause, and don't say 'your niggers' so emphatically. In the first place I have but two native servants, not fifty, but either of those two would very much resent your calling him a 'nigger.' You know as well as I do that to call a native of this island, or of any other island of the group, a nigger, is so grossly insulting that his knife would be out in an instant."

"Ah, you and I have different ideas on the subject," he said sneeringly; "but that does not matter to me at the moment. My paid servant has absconded from my service, and I have come to get him. That is plain enough, isn't it?"

"Quite. But I am an Englishman, Mr. Krause, and not to be easily bluffed because a man comes stamping into my house with a brace of pistols in his belt."

"I did not come here to argue. I came here for that nigger—my property."

"Your *property*! Is the man a slave? Now, look here, Mr. Krause; you have used the man so brutally that he is unable to stand on his feet. He and the girl——"

"I don't want the girl, and I daresay you do," he said, with a sneering laugh that made me long to haul off and hit the fellow between the eyes; "she's a nuisance, and if I ever again see her prowling about my house and practising her infernal fooleries on my wife, I'll put a bullet through her. But the man I *will* have."



“Stop!” I cried warningly, as he took a step toward the sick man, “stop, before you run yourself into mischief. Listen to me. I have but to raise my hand and call, and you will find yourself trussed up fore and aft to a pole like a pig, and carried back to your village.”

“Out of my way,” he shouted hoarsely, as with blazing eyes he tried to thrust me aside.

“Back, man, back!” I cried. “Are you mad? The natives here will kill you if you attempt to force——”

“And I’ll kill you, you meddling English hog,” he said through his set teeth, and, before I could guard, his right hand shot out and grasped me by the throat, and he literally swung me off my feet and dashed me against the centre posts of the house with such violence that I went down in a heap.

When I came to a few minutes afterwards, Tepi was supporting me on his knees, and Niābon was putting some brandy to my lips. The house was full of natives, who were speaking in suppressed but excited tones. I swallowed the brandy, and then, as Tepi helped me rise, the natives silently parted to right and left, and saw something that, half-dazed as I was, filled me with horror.

Krause lay on his back in the centre of the room white duck clothes saturated with blood, which were welling from three or four wounds in his deep chest. I went over to him. He was dead.

“Who hath done this?” I asked.

“I, master,” and Tematau placed an ensanguined hand on mine.



BEFORE I COULD GUARD, HIS RIGHT HAND SHOT OUT AND GRASPED
ME BY THE THROAT.

[To face p. 32.]



“And I,” said a softer voice, and Niābon’s eyes met mine calmly. “Tematau and I together each stabbed him twice.”

As soon as I was able to pull myself together, I desired all the natives but three of the head men to leave, and then, after the unfortunate German’s body was covered from view by a large mat, I asked the principal man of the village to tell me what he knew of the tragedy.

“I know nothing,” was his reply. “Niābon can tell thee.”

Niābon, in response to my inquiring glance—I was shaking from head to foot as I looked at her, but her calm, quiet eyes as she looked into mine restored my nerve—spoke clearly.

“The German dashed thee against the centre posts of the house, Simi. Then he drew a little pistol from his breast and shot at me, and the bullet struck me on the neck. See,” and she showed us a still bleeding score on the right side of her neck, where a Derringer bullet had cut through the flesh. “And then he sprang at Tematau, but Tematau was on his feet and met him and stabbed him twice; and, as he fell I too stabbed him in the breast.”

“This is an evil day for me,” I said to the three head men, “and I fear it will prove an evil day to the people of this village, for the wife of the man who lies there told me that a ship of war of his country was soon to be here at this island. And how shall we account for his death?”

Niābon bent forward and spoke—



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“Have no fear, Simi. Neither thou, nor Tematau, nor the people of this village, nor I, shall come to any harm from the German fighting-ship. For when it comes thou and I, and Tematau, and Tepi, who know of the blood let out this day upon the floor of thy house, will be far away. And when the captain of the fighting-ship questioneth, and sayeth to the people, ‘Where is my countryman?’ the people will shake their heads and say, ‘We know not. He and his wife, and the Englishman, and Tepi, and Tematau, and the witch woman Niäbon have gone. They have sailed away to beyond the rim of the sea and the sky—we know not whither.’”

I listened with all my faculties wide awake, and yet with a strange sense of helplessness overpowering me. Then Niäbon made a swift gesture to the head men. They rose, and lifting the huge body of Krause, carried it away.

She came to me and pressed her hand on my forehead.

“You are tired,” she said in English. “Lie down.”

She took my hand and led me to my couch beside the window and then bent over me.

“Sleep, sleep long. For now the time is near and thou must have strength.”



KRAUSE LAY ON HIS BACK IN THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM. . . . HE WAS DEAD.

[To face p. 34]





CHAPTER IV

I SLEPT well on towards four o'clock in the afternoon, and when I awakened I found the house deserted by all but my man Tepi, who was seated cross-legged near me with a cup containing my fever mixture beside him. He held it up to me silently.

Even before I raised myself to drink I felt that I was a stronger man, physically and mentally, than I had been six hours previously, and my veins no longer seemed as if they were filled with liquid fire. I drank the mixture and then looked about me, and saw that every ensanguined trace of the tragedy which had occurred a few hours before had been removed. The coarse and somewhat worn matting which had covered the floor had been taken away and replaced by new squares, and the room presented the usual neat and orderly appearance in which it was always kept by Tepi and my other servant.

"Master," said Tepi, "art hungry?"

"Aye," I replied, "I would eat; but first tell me of the dead man. Who hath taken him away?"

The man, instead of answering me in a straightforward manner, bent his head and muttered something I could not hear.

I jumped off my couch and went outside, and the first person I ran against was my cook, an old grizzled fellow of about sixty years of age named Pai. He was carrying a freshly-killed fowl in his hand, looked at me in an unconcerned manner as if nothing had occurred, and asked me would I have it broiled or boiled.

"As you will," I said impatiently. "Tell me, Pai, whither have they taken the dead white man?"

He made a peculiar and significant gesture—one that is not often used, but when it is it implies that certain matters or things must not be further alluded to, but must be for ever buried in oblivion. I put my hand on his tough, naked, and wrinkled shoulder, and again repeated my question.

"I know of no dead white man," he replied, looking me steadily in the face, and yet answering me in his usual respectful manner. Then he sat down beside the low stone wall surrounding the house, and began to pluck the fowl, casually remarking that it was fat for its age.

Somewhat puzzled at the reticence of my servants, I walked across my compound towards the native village, which, as I have before mentioned, was some distance from my house, and as I walked I felt at every footstep a renewed bodily vigour, and almost unconsciously I took out my pipe, filled it, and began to smoke with an enjoyment denied to me for many months.

The day was gloriously bright and cool, and the westering sun on my right hand shone on a sea of the deepest blue, whose placid bosom was dotted by a fleet of canoes with their mat sails spread to the now gentle



I DIRECTED MY STEPS TOWARDS THE GREAT OPEN-SIDED "MONIEP."
[To face p. 36.]





trade wind, cruising to and fro catching flying fish. This seemed strange to me, bearing in mind the events of the past few hours. The death of a white man, even from natural causes, was of itself generally a matter of such importance to the natives of any of the mid-Pacific isles, that their daily avocations were suspended, and the house of the deceased man would not only be surrounded on the outside by a circle of people sitting on their mats and awaiting their turn to enter and express their condolences with his wife or children, but filled inside as well.

The first houses I passed on the outskirts of the village were occupied only by women and children, who all gave me their usual cheerful greeting of *Tiākāpo*, *Simi!* ("Good-day, Jim") and one or two of them added a few words of congratulation upon my improved appearance, and then calmly went on with their work, such as mat-making, mending fishing nets, cooking, etc., but no one of them gave the slightest indication of even having heard that anything unusual had occurred.

Crossing the village square—if it could be so called—I directed my steps towards the great open-sided *moniep*, or council house, from which came the sound of many voices, talking in the vociferous manner common to all natives of the Gilbert and Kingsmill groups. As I drew near I saw that there were about twenty men seated inside, smoking, card playing, or making cinnnet for fishing lines by twisting up the strands of coco-nut fibre on their naked thighs. As they heard my footsteps on the gravel, their conversation dropped a little, but they all gave me *Tiākāpo!* as usual, invited me to enter and

sit down and smoke, and then went on with either their work or their pastime.

“Now,” I thought, as I sat down on the mat brought to me, “I shall get these fellows to tell me the meaning of all this reticence about the disposal of Krause’s body.”

For some minutes I smoked in silence and took the opportunity of looking at my hosts. They were all either middle-aged or old men, and were all known to me personally, especially one old bald-headed fellow named Kaibuka—“The Ship.”

In his younger days this Kaibuka had acquired an evil reputation for being the instigator and leader of cutting-off attacks on whaleships and trading vessels, and his performances had gained him such *kudos* and respect from his savage associates that now in his old age he was the most influential of the three principal head men of the whole lagoon. Like all the others present, he wore but the usual *airiri*, or girdle of grass, round his loins, and his dark reddish-brown body was covered from head to waist with the scars of wounds received in earlier years. Each of his ear-lobes, pierced in infancy, had from long years of continuous distention by means of rolls of pandanus leaf, become so pendulous that they now hung loosely upon his shoulders in two great bights of thin flesh as thick as a lead pencil, though one of them had twisted in it a long stick of tobacco and a spare pipe. He was not, however, a bad-looking old ruffian, and his shining bald head, still perfect teeth, and extremely Jewish cast of features gave him quite a distinctive appearance from the younger men, whose



long coarse hair, cut away across the forehead and hanging loosely down on their shoulders and backs, made their fierce, savage faces appear as if they looked at you from a moving frame of black. They certainly were a wild-looking lot, but their appearance somewhat belied their dispositions—at least as far as I was personally concerned. We had always got along very well together both socially and in business, and I was well aware that whilst they disliked and mistrusted Krause they placed implicit confidence in me.

Putting down my pipe on the mat beside me, I told old Kaibuka that I desired to talk to them.

There was a dead silence at once.

“*E rai rai*” (“Good”), he said.

“Kaibuka,” I said, “hath the dead white man been taken to his wife?”

He looked stolidly at me for an instant, and then answered with an air of intense surprise.

“Dead white man! What dead white man, Simi? I know of none. We saw no dead white man!”

“Aye, we know of none,” echoed the others in unison.

I began to feel both angry and uncomfortable, and showed it: but for the moment I was too puzzled to do more than stare at them each in turn. They looked straight before them as if their faces were so many stone jugs—they had about as much expression.

Again I addressed myself to Kaibuka.

“Why do ye make this pretence? Thou thyself, Kaibuka, and thou, Berau, were, with many others, in my house when his dead body lay on the floor. Why



40 THE STRANGE ADVENTURE OF

are ye all so silent? And whither have the girl Niäbon and Tematau gone?"

This time I got an answer—to my last question, at any rate.

"Niäbon and Tematau have gone across the lagoon in a canoe. They desired to talk with the white man's wife. In a little time, as darkness falls, they will return to thee."

"Did *they* take the dead man with them, then?" I persisted.

The old fellow met my inquiring glance quite calmly. "I know of no dead man, Simi."

I glared angrily at them all round, and then for a moment wondered if they were all crazy or I alone was wrong in my head. I was rising to my feet with an exclamation of anger at their obstinacy when the old bald-head motioned me to stay. Then at a sign from him all the others gathered up their *impedimenta* and quietly went off in various directions, leaving us alone.

"Simi," he said, coming swiftly over and crouching in front of me, "be wise. Ask no one of the white man who was here yesterday; for no one will tell thee but Niäbon. There is death in store for many, many people, if ye heed not my words. Go back to thy house, and be patient and wait, and ask naught of any one but Niäbon of what is past. Wouldst thou see this land soaked in blood because of *one* man?"

He spoke in such curious, whispered tones, and kept his keen hawk-like face so close to mine that I saw he was in deadly earnest.



“Promise me, Simi. Promise me to rest in thy house and wait for Niābon.”

“As you will. I shall wait.”

I walked slowly back to my house and took a stiff glass of grog to steady my nerves, which were beginning to feel a little upset.

“It’s time I got out of this place,” I thought, as, lighting my pipe, I went down to my boat again and busied myself in taking out all her fittings, examining and replacing them again.

When I returned to the house for my supper it was quite dark, and just as my lamp was lit Niābon entered.

CHAPTER V

THINKING it would be wiser to refrain from asking her any questions until she had at least rested a little—for she seemed to be very weary—I said nothing to her but a few words of welcome, and bade my servants lay the supper, then told her that I was sure she was both hungry and tired. She replied that she certainly was tired, having come on foot from Taritai to save time. The canoe with Tematau was to follow on later in the night when the tide turned, and when there would be more water on the upper sand flats of the lagoon.

“Very well, Niäbon,” I said in English, “now sit down and drink a cup of tea and eat a little. Then we can talk.”

“I have many things of which to tell thee, Simi,” she said, “for I have been speaking long with the wife of the man Krause, and——”

I told her that it would please me better if she first ate something. She at once obeyed, but instead of sitting at the table with me she seated herself on a mat near me, and Pai waited upon her whilst big Tepi attended to me. Only once did she speak during the meal, when she asked me if I had had any recurrence of either fever

or ague, and she was undoubtedly pleased when I said that I had not, and that another course or two of her medicine would, I believed, cure me. She smiled, and told me she would make more of the mixture that evening.

After eating a very slight supper she made herself a cigarette and sat and smoked until I had finished my pipe. Then she came a little nearer to me, and I felt ashamed of myself for not having asked her if her neck gave her much pain, for I now noticed that the neck and front of her dress were blood-stained. She made light of the wound, however; said it was but skin deep, and would be healed in a few days. But I insisted upon her letting me see for myself. She consented somewhat unwillingly, and I saw that she had had a very narrow escape, the heavy bullet from Krause's Derringer having scored her neck pretty deeply and made a wound nearly two inches long. She had, however, she told me, had it attended to by Mrs. Krause, who had done the very best thing that could have been done to a superficial injury of the kind—painted it liberally with Friar's Balsam, which though causing intense pain for a few minutes, had quickly stayed the flow of blood and prevented any inflammation from setting in.

"Is Mrs. Krause well, Niäbon?" I asked as I readjusted the bandage.

"She is well."

"And she knows how her husband died?"

"She knows how he died, but knows not whose were the hands that dealt the blows. And, Simi, it is well that she does not know, for I am her friend, and it would grieve her did she know all."



I thought a moment or two before answering—

“How can the truth be kept from her, Niābon? There are many people who know 'twas thee and Tematau who slew him.”

“*She* will never know, Simi,” she asserted earnestly; “there is but one man who could tell her, and him she will not ask.”

“Who is that?” I asked wonderingly.

“Thyself.”

“Why should she not ask me? Her husband met his death in my house. I saw his body lying at my feet. Dost think she will fail to question *me* if others whom she may ask remain silent?”

“She will ask thee no questions concerning him. His death hath taken away from her a terror by day and bad dreams at night that for two years hath wrung her heart and weakened her body, which is but frail. Have pity on her, Simi, and say nothing to her when thou seest her of her dead husband. He is gone; and yet, although she wept when I told her he was dead, and she knelt and prayed for his spirit which has gone beyond, I know well that now some peace hath come into her heart. And I have given her sleep.”

As she spoke she turned her strangely sombrous and liquid eyes to mine in such an appealing glance that I could not resist her magnetic power, strive as I would.

“I will do as you wish, Niābon,” I said, falling weakly into English again. “You are a strange girl, but I am sure that you mean well, not alone to me, but to that poor heartbroken woman. But you must tell

me the meaning of all this strange silence on the part of the people of this village. Why do they deny the death of Krause? How *can* they conceal it? It cannot possibly be hidden. There is a German man-of-war coming to this island soon—Mrs. Krause herself told me—and how will these people account to the captain for his death? You and Tematau, who together killed him, cannot escape. And if I am questioned—as I shall be—what can I do? I cannot lie about a murder.”

“It was no murder, Simi,” she said steadily, and I felt that the girl was but right in her assertion; “it is no murder to strike and kill, and kill quickly, he who would slay the innocent and unoffending. That man was a devil.”

“What have you done with him, Niābon? He might have been the devil you say he was; but he was a white man, and it is my place to see that he is buried as Christians bury the dead. He used me roughly, but——”

She placed her hand on my knee, and her very touch subdued my excitement.

“Simi, the man is dead, and not even a strand of his hair is left on earth. No one can ever question thee, or Tematau, or me, about him. He is gone, and even his name is already vanished from these people among whom he has dwelt. Dost not understand me?”

“No, I do not understand, Niābon,” I said more gently. “How can his name be vanished when but a few hours ago he was alive and well. Tell me, in plain English, what you mean by saying that no one can



question you and Tematau and myself about the manner of his death?"

"Because, Simi, thou and I and others shall be far away from here when the man's countrymen come in the fighting-ship."

"I wish to Heaven we were far away at this moment," I said impatiently. "I am sick to death of the place, and don't want to find myself a prisoner on board a German man-of-war on suspicion of being concerned in Krause's death."

She again repeated her assurance that I should never be questioned.

"Where is Mrs. Krause now?" I asked.

"At Taritai."

"Niäbon"—and I placed my hand on her head—"you must not keep me in the dark about some things. I want you to answer me truly some questions. And, though I do not know why, I have this moment resolved to leave the island as quickly as possible. Would you come with me?"

"Yes, Mr. Sherry. Of course I am coming with you," she answered in English. "I told you that you and I and some other people would soon be together upon the sea. And I will answer any question you ask me. I don't want to deceive you. Why should I try to deceive you?"

As she turned her full, soft eyes up to my face, I saw in them such undoubted sincerity that I felt it was not possible for me again to doubt her.

"No, I am sure you will not deceive me, Niäbon. And I want you to tell me straightforwardly the mean-



ing of all this mystery. First of all, what has been done with the German's body? where is it buried?"

"In the sea. It was taken far out where the water is very, very deep—three hundred fathoms—and the mats in which it was wrapped were weighted so heavily with stones that it took six men to carry it down to the canoe."

"Why was this done? Why was he not buried on shore?"

"I will tell you, Mr. Sherry. It was done so that when the German man-of-war comes here, no trace of him will ever be found;" and then she told me frankly the whole story, and the meaning of the strange silence of the natives.

Krause, she said, after his savage attack upon Tematau, had told his terrified wife that he meant to bring back Tematau, and kill Niäbon. After drinking heavily all night, he had started off alone in the morning, armed with a brace of revolvers and a Derringer pistol. He at first tried to get some forty or fifty of the Taritai young men to accompany him, and make a regular marauding expedition upon my village; but though they were eager to go with him and engage in battle with their old enemies, Niäbon, assisted by the more cautious head men, succeeded in dissuading them, and finally Krause went off alone. He travelled along the inner beach of the lagoon, and as soon as he reached my village marched boldly up to my house, boastfully calling out to the natives that he had come to take Tematau out of the Englishman's house, alive or dead—a few minutes later he himself was dead.

A hurried consultation was at once held by the head men, and it was resolved to dispose of Krause's body so effectually that no trace of it would ever be found, and every man, woman, and child in the village of Utiroa was sternly warned not only against even alluding to the manner of his death, but even admitting that he had even been seen by any one of them on that particular day. Hastily wrapping the dead man in mats, the body was taken out to sea, and sunk as Niābon had described. Then the fleet of canoes from the village began fishing as if nothing unusual had occurred, and after they had been out some hours they were met by eight or ten canoes from Taritai, which were also engaged in fishing. The moment they were within speaking distance the Taritai men inquired whether Krause had fulfilled his threat, and carried Tematau away. The Utiroa people affected great surprise, and said that they had seen nothing of him, but that most probably he had thought better of doing such a foolish and offensive thing, and had returned to Taritai again. The two fleets of canoes remained together for some little time, discussing Krause, and then one of the Taritai men frankly admitted that he (Krause) had tried to induce them to make a raid on Utiroa, but that Niābon and the head men had set their faces against such a wicked act of aggression.

"It is well for him then that he did not come to Utiroa to-day," said old Kaibuka's son gravely. "Such a man as he is not wanted in our town. So keep him at Taritai."

In the meantime Niābon and Tematau had set out



THE FLEET OF CANOES BEGAN FISHING AS IF NOTHING UNUSUAL HAD OCCURRED.

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for Taritai to acquaint Mrs. Krause of the tragedy which had occurred. The moment they entered the village they were surrounded by natives, who eagerly inquired when Krause was returning—had he driven Tematau out of the Englishman's house? etc., etc. Both Niābon and her companion expressed surprise—neither they nor any one else in Utiroa had seen Krause, they said, and Tematau had come with her to ask Mrs. Krause to try and induce her husband to let him leave his service. The natives accepted their story without the slightest doubt, and the two went on their way to the white man's house.

As soon as she and Mrs. Krause were alone Niābon told her the cause of her visit and the steps which had been taken by the head men of Utiroa to conceal her husband's death, so that when the German warship arrived and found him missing, the people of Utiroa could not be, even after the most searching investigation, connected with his disappearance. Mrs. Krause quite agreed that a wise course had been taken, for were it proved that her husband had been killed in Utiroa, the man-of-war would certainly inflict a terrible punishment on the village, as was usual with German warships' procedure in the South Seas.

Then at Niābon's suggestion she summoned the head men, and told them that her husband had not reached Utiroa. Something must have happened to him. Would they send out and search for him, and if they found him, urge him to return, as Tematau had come back, and there was now no occasion for him (Krause) to offend the people of Utiroa by entering their village armed.

The head men were only too willing, and at once sent out search parties, and when Niābon was coming back, she met two of them, who told her that they had been to Utiroa itself, but not one single person had seen anything of the white man, and they were now returning along the weather side of the island to search for him in the thick jungle, where they imagined he might have strayed and lost himself.

“So that is why these people here have acted so strangely, Mr. Sherry,” she concluded. “It would be terrible for them to be all killed, and the village burnt. For the Germans are very cruel. I have seen them do very, very cruel things.”

“I think the Utiroa people have done right. The German brought his death on himself. But I fear that the secret must come out some day. The Taritai people will surely suspect something.”

“No. No one of the Taritai people will ever know. By this time to-morrow they will all say that he has been drowned when crossing one of those narrow channels between the islands on the weather side, for there are many deep pools, and the coral sometimes breaks under the pressure of a man’s foot. And so they will think he has fallen in one of those pools, and his body carried out to sea, or into the lagoon, and eaten by the sharks.”

Her emphatic manner reassured me.

“Well, it is a bad business, Niābon; but it cannot be helped. But I shall get away from here as soon as possible.”

“I am glad. And Simi, there is yet one other thing of which I have not yet spoken. It is of Lucia.”

She always called Mrs. Krause by her Christian name, as did the natives generally.

“What of her?”

“She desires greatly to come with us in the boat. And I pray thee to be kind to her, else will she die here of loneliness and terror.”

CHAPTER VI

THIS was a pretty astonishing request, and for a few seconds I gazed blankly at the girl.

“Good Heavens!” I said, “she must be mad to think of such a thing! And I should be as equally mad to even entertain the idea of taking her with me in a small boat on a voyage of more than a thousand miles.”

“Nay, she is not mad, Simi. And she hath set her heart on this. It would be cruel to leave her to die.”

“And to take her away would be still more cruel,” I cried. Such a long, long voyage is a hard and dangerous venture even for strong men—men who should be both good navigators and good seamen. But a weak, delicate woman—oh, it’s all sheer nonsense, girl.”

She put her hand on mine, and the moment I felt her warm touch, my impatience ceased. I would argue the thing out with her, I thought, and soon convince her that it would be impossible. Impossible—folly, utter folly. I must not think of such a thing for a moment. And yet—and yet—I rose from my seat, walked to the window, and then turned to Niābon.

“’Tis a mad idea,” I said, trying to speak angrily, and failing lamentably. “’Tis you alone, Niābon, who hath made her ask me to do this.”

“That is not true, Simi,” she replied quietly. “Yet when I spoke to her of our voyage, her heart’s wishes came to her lips, and I knew that she would ask to come with thee, even as I know that thou wilt not leave her here to die.”

I could make no answer for the time. What was coming over me, that I could listen to such a suggestion with patience? What a strange influence did this girl Niābon possess that I, a sensible man, felt she could and would make me yield to her wishes, and let a sickly, delicate woman like Mrs. Krause accompany me on a voyage that presented nothing but danger. The fever must have weakened my brain, I thought.

But then, on the other hand, Mrs. Krause was a free agent. She had no children. Her husband had just been killed. I, the only other white man on the island to whom she could look to for social intercourse at long intervals, was leaving the island. Her mind had been tortured, and her life made miserable by her brute of a husband. Could I, as a *man*, leave her among a community of naked savages to fret out her life? She wished to come with me. Well, I should tell her of the dangers—aye, and the horrors—of such a voyage as I was bent upon. I should conceal nothing from her—nothing, absolutely nothing. I should tell her of how the wife of the captain of the ship *Octavia*, from Sydney to Singapore, had seen her husband die, and the famishing crew of the boat which had left the burnt ship, drag his body from her with savage curses and threats, and——

“Simi.”

“What is it, Niābon? What would you have me do? Why do you tempt me to let this poor, weak lady accompany me on a voyage, which will, most likely, end in death to us all?”

“There will be danger, but no death,” she replied dreamily, turning her face away from me towards the sea, and slowly extending her arms; “and thou, Simi—thou shalt gain thy heart’s desire. For I have seen it all, even as I see it now.”

“My heart’s desire! Tell me what is my heart’s desire?”

I stepped up to her and placed my hand gently on her head, and, bending down, saw that her eyes were closed.

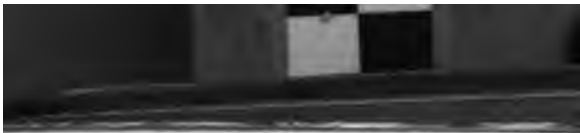
“My heart’s desire, Niābon? tell me what is my heart’s desire,” I said again, and as I spoke I caught my breath, and tried hard to steady myself.

“Fame, Fame! The praise of men for a great deed! This is thy heart’s desire, Simi. To do such things as were done by the three men of whom thou dreamest——”

“What three men?” I whispered, and in an instant there flashed through my mind the memory of the daring deeds of Jack Collier of Tahiti, of tousle-headed Barney Watt of the *Ripple*, and big Cameron of Honolulu. “Who are the three men of whom I dream?”

She pressed her hands to her bosom, and then turned her face, with her eyes still closed, to mine.

“I do not know, Simi. I cannot see beyond as I can do sometimes; for I am tired, and many other



things are in my mind. But yet I can see one man of the three whom thou dost so often think."

"Tell me, then," and I knelt beside the girl and looked upwards to her face—"tell me of one man of the three. What is he like?"

"Simi, oh, Simi, be not too hard with me; for though I can see many faces, they are new and strange to me. And they quickly become faint and dim, and then vanish—but the sound of their voices seem to beat upon my closed ears—and I cannot understand, Simi, I cannot understand."

I took her hand in mine and pressed it gently. I did not want to torment the poor girl, but I did want to know something more of the one man of the three of whom she had spoken.

"Can you tell me of the one man, Niābon?" I said gently. "Is he young and strong, and of good looks?"

"He is not young, but is strong, and his eyes are deep-set and stern; and a great red beard flows down upon his broad chest; his feet are covered with boots that come to the knee, and he carries a stick in his hand, for he is lame."

I started. I *knew* whom she meant—it was Cameron of Honolulu, and had the man been there himself, in his rough rig-out, and leaning on his heavy stick as he walked, she could not have described him more clearly!

"No more shall I doubt you," I cried. "I will do all you wish."

She made no answer, but sat with eyes still closed, and her bosom gently rising and falling as if she were

asleep. Fearing that I should do her some harm if I endeavoured to rouse her from what seemed to be a trance, I went softly away, and with a strange feeling of exaltation tingling through my veins, took down my roll of charts from my book-shelf, and opening out No. 780—one of the four sheets embracing the North and South Pacific—studied it carefully.

“I shall do it, I shall do it,” I said aloud, and already I fancied I could see my boat sailing into either Levuka or else Apia Harbour, fifteen hundred miles away, and hear the cheers, and see the flags run up by the ships in port, as I stepped out of my boat on to the beach to report myself to the British Consul—“Jim Sherry, master and owner of a twenty-eight feet whale-boat, from Tarawa Island, in the Gilbert Group.”

It *would* be an achievement, and I should become as well known as Cameron. But—and here my vanity received a check—Cameron sailed fifteen hundred miles in a poorly equipped dinghy, and yet succeeded in reaching Jaluit in the Marshall Islands, whilst I should have everything in my favour as far as equipment went.

But I would do more than Cameron did, I thought. If I reached either Samoa or Fiji safely, I would go on across to New Caledonia, and possibly from there on to the east coast of Australia! That would be something that had never yet been done by any one in a small boat, and would make me famous indeed!

That night I was too excited to think of sleeping, so remained up and worked at a new jib I was making, taking care to avoid any noise, for I found that Niābon was now really asleep, and I did not want to disturb her.



She did not awaken till nearly midnight, just as Tematau returned. He handed me a note. It was from Mrs. Krause, asking me, if it would not be inconvenient to me, would I come to Taritai in the morning, as she greatly wished to see me on a matter of importance. I smiled at Niābon as I read it, for I could easily guess what it was that the lady was so anxious to see me about.

I started off as soon as it was daylight, and on reaching Taritai village found Mrs. Krause expecting me, early as it was. She was pale, but yet, I imagined, looking better than she had when we last met. She went into the subject at once.

“Mr. Sherry, will it not be possible for you to let me go with you in the boat?”

“Yes, you can come. But I tell you frankly that we may never see Samoa or Fiji, for the risks of such a long voyage must necessarily be very great, even if we have fine weather all the way.”

Her face lit up with pleasure. “It is kind of you. And you will not find me troublesome. I should go mad if I were left alone here, for Niābon has always been such a friend to me. Whenever my husband was away, she came and stayed with me.”

This allusion to her husband, I could see, pained her, and therefore, although I knew that several parties were out in search of him, I did not mention his name to her.

“Mr. Sherry,” she said presently, “I have a suggestion to make. One of the boats belonging to this station was lost, as you know, not long ago, but there is another,

a large one, which was sold to some natives. Would you like me to send for her, and if you like it better than your own, I think we could buy it back."

I knew the boat well enough by sight. She was half-decked, and although not a beauty to look at, was certainly a much better and safer boat than my own for a long voyage. I decided to inspect her, and my hostess at once despatched a man to the village where the boat was then lying with a message to the chief to bring her to Taritai. I told Mrs. Krause that if the boat was seaworthy she would certainly be far preferable to my own, and that I would buy it from the natives. And then, much against my will, I had to ask her what she intended doing with her husband's property when she left the island.

"That is one subject upon which I want your advice. Will you look at his account-books, and tell me his position with the firm in Hamburg?"

Krause had kept his books very methodically, and after taking stock of the little trade goods that were still unsold, and counting his cash, I was able to tell her pretty exactly how he stood. There was about £200 due to him altogether.

"What would you advise me to do?" she asked.

"As far as the house and all that is in it is concerned, you can do nothing but leave it under the care of the head men of Taritai. They will undertake the responsibility, and hand the station over to the first German ship that calls."

"There will be a man-o'-war here soon, the *Elizabeth*. At least, we heard that she was likely to come here some time this year."



I said she would be doing wisely if she remained on the island, and got the man-of-war captain to settle up Krause's affairs; but she shuddered and looked at me in such fear that I said no more, beyond remarking that as her husband had left no will—at least, as far as she knew—I feared she would have trouble in getting the amount due to him at the time of his death. She would probably have to go to Sydney, where there was a branch of the firm he was trading for.

“I don't want the £200,” she said vehemently. “I have a little money of my own—about twenty dollars—and one cannot well starve anywhere in the South Seas. I am young and can work. I could earn my living by making Panama hats if I could find nothing else to do.”



CHAPTER VII

“**T**WENTY dollars is not much of a stand-by in a town like Apia or Levuka,” I said gravely, as I looked at her now animated features. “Living there is very expensive—as I know to my sorrow—and unless you have friends at either place, you would have to go to an hotel in the first place.”

“I am not afraid, Mr. Sherry. And I am not jesting about the hat-making. All of my mother’s family were very expert at it, and quite often I have seen as much as twenty-five or thirty Mexican dollars paid for one of our hats. We could have sold ten times the number had we been able to have made more.”

“Where was this?” I asked, with interest.

“At Agana, in the Marianas. My father lived there for many years. He was a very poor man, and had a hard struggle to get along with such a large family. So we all had to help him as much as we could. He was an Englishman named Arundel, and was in some Government employment in Rangoon. I do not remember exactly what it was, but think he was connected with maritime matters, for I remember that he had many nautical books, and used to go away frequently in

the Government steamers to Perak and Singapore. I can scarcely remember my mother, for she died when I, who was the youngest of the family, was about six years old. But I think she was of Dutch-Javanese parentage, for sometimes she would speak to us children in both languages, and I remember her being very dark. Soon after she died, my father—who was always of a restless disposition I suppose—either gave up, or lost his employment in Rangoon, and taking us with him, settled on Tinian, in the Marianas, where he had something to do with cattle. But we did not remain there permanently; we were always moving about from one island to another—sometimes we would be living at Saipan, sometimes at Rota, and sometimes at Agana, in Guam. At this last place—which I love dearly—we were very happy, although we were so poor.”

She stopped somewhat abruptly, and added that it was at this place she had met Krause, who came to the Marianas from Manila, on behalf of his firm, who had a large establishment at the latter city.

“I should like to see the Marianas—or the Ladrones, as we traders call them,” I said. “There is a very dear friend of mine now living at San Anlaccio in Guam ——”

“What is his name?” she asked quickly.

“José Otano. He was mate of a New Bedford whaler.”

“I know him, I know him,” she cried excitedly, “he and his mother, and his two sisters—Nicolacca and Maria. Oh, how I should love to see them again! I remember going to San Anlaccio with my father and an

elder sister, and staying there for two or three months. My father was buying cattle for *tasajo*, and we lived with the Otano family. They were very kind to us, and we three little girls used to ride together on the water buffaloes, and one day their brother José, who I remember was a sailor, had to come and search for us, for we were lost in a great swamp between Punta de los Amantes and the stone cross of Padre Sanvitores."

"Those are the people," I said, feeling pleasantly excited myself that we should have mutual friends. "I have often heard him speak of his mother and two sisters. And often, very often he has urged me to pay him a visit, and settle down with him. He says that I should not want to leave the Marianas once I could see what a beautiful country it is."

"No, indeed! Ah, Mr. Sherry, 'tis indeed a beautiful country. I wonder if I shall ever see it again! My father, two brothers, and three of my sisters died of fever just before I married Krause, and there are but two of us left now—myself and another sister who is married to the Spanish doctor at San Ignacio de Agana. Oh, shall I ever see her face again?"

Her eyes sparkled, and her pale face flushed as she bent towards me with clasped hands: "Oh, the mere thought of it makes me feel a young girl again."

"Why should you not?" I began, then I ceased speaking, and walked up and down the room thinking and I felt my cheeks flush as a project, daring enough came to my mind.

"Have you a big sheet chart of the Pacific—the blue-backed one?" I asked.



I SPREAD THE CHART OUT ON THE TABLE. *[To face p. 62.]*



“Yes, there it is in the corner beside you, with some others. But it is old.”

“It will do.”

I spread it out on the table, and weighted down each of the four ends by means of books, so as to get a good view.

“Come here, Mrs. Krause, and look.”

She came over to me, and then her thin little hand followed my forefinger as I made a pencilled mark on the chart to the south-east.

“Here is Tarawa; here is Apia in Samoa, nearly fifteen hundred miles distant. Here is the island of Ovalau in Fiji, about the same distance. Do you see?”

“Yes, I see.”

“And here, north-west from Tarawa, is your home on Guam—more than two thousand miles away. 'Tis a long, long way—but it could be done.”

“A long, long way indeed.” She lifted her eyes to me—and then she placed her hand on mine. “Why do you smile, Mr. Sherry; and yet why say ‘it could be done’?”

“Let us sit down and talk the matter over quietly;” and I led her to a seat.

“Why should we go to Fiji or Samoa?” I said quickly, my blood afire with my new project. “There is nothing to draw you thither, is there?”

“Nothing. I know no one at either place. But you——”

“I! It matters but little to me where I go. But I am sick to death of this island, and long to be doing

something. I am a man without a home, without ties, a wandering South Sea deadbeat—no friends.”

“You must not say that,” she said softly. “I am sure you have many friends. Just now you spoke of one—José Otano.”

“Aye, I did; but I meant friends in Europe, in the outer and greater world—people who care for, who even give me a passing thought.”

“That is sad, indeed. Oh, it must be sad to be alone, quite, quite alone in the world. And I am very, very sorry for you, Mr. Sherry.”

The deep ring of sympathy in her voice warmed my heart to the little woman.

“Mrs. Krause,” I said—and I spoke quietly, “you are a brave woman, else you would not dare to come with me in a small boat to so distant a place as Fiji or Samoa. But will you be braver still, and risk your life in a still more dangerous enterprise?”

“I will, indeed, Mr. Sherry. I have no sense of the fear of death—none, absolutely none,” she replied.

“Then let us give up the idea of Fiji,” I cried, catching her hand, “let us go to the north-west—to Guam, to your own home.”

“Oh,” and she gave a low gasp of pleasure. “Oh, yes, indeed, it will be a wonderful voyage.”

“Yes, if we ever get there,” I said. “But we can try.”

“You will not fail. Of that I am as sure as I am of my own existence.”

Again we turned to the chart, and were poring over it together when the messenger returned to say that the



I HURRIED DOWN TO THE BEACH, AND SAW THE NATIVE OWNERS, AND THEN THE BOAT ITSELF.
[To face p. 64.]



natives had arrived with the boat. I hurried down to the beach, and saw the native owners, and then the boat itself, which, after very little trouble, I bought for ten muskets, a couple of tierces of tobacco, and a hundred fathoms of red turkey twill. Then, after giving them some instructions, I went back to the house.

"Well, Mr. Sherry, what do you think of the boat?"

"Fairly well, Mrs. Krause. Anyway, I've bought her, and if you look out of the window, you'll see the crew getting her under way again to sail her over to Utiroa. Now I must get home, for there will be much to do. The first thing that I must get done is to alter my own boat's mainsail and jib, and make them large enough for my new ship, whose sails are quite rotten. Then I shall make an extra new suit as well. I'll set Niābon to work to-night."

"Ah, let me help! *Do*. It would give me such real pleasure."

"Indeed, I shall be very glad of your assistance. I can cut out the new suit, and you and Niābon sew them. It will only be very light material, but, for all that, may make your fingers suffer."

"I don't mind if it does—neither of your sail-makers will grumble," she said brightly. "When shall I come?"

"To-morrow. I'll send the whale-boat for you. You will find mine an untidy house, and Tepi a great cook—as far as size goes. He stands six feet."

And so with a laugh, and lighter hearts than had been ours for many a long day, we said goodbye till the morrow.



CHAPTER VIII

AS soon as I arrived at Utiroa village with my new boat, I had her hauled up above high-water mark, close to the boat-shed, and then turned her over so as to get a good look at the bottom in the morning. Then without telling either Tematau or Niābon the reason for my purchase, I bade them open my trade-room door, and in a few minutes we were engaged in paying the late owners their tobacco, guns, ammunition, and bolts of turkey twill. They were well satisfied with the price I paid them, especially when I supplemented it with the gift of a case of biscuit and a case of tinned Australian meats, of which I had an ample stock. They were very much disposed to remain in the house and give my servants their view of the cause of Krause's strange disappearance, which was—as they had previously told me—that he had been seized and devoured by an enormous reptile, half eel and half turtle, which had been known to swallow not only human beings, but such trifles as double canoes, groves of coco-nut trees, etcetera; but on my telling them that I was very tired and wanted a quiet house, they retired to the native village to spend the night.

Calling Niābon and Tematau to me, I told them why

I had bought the boat. They both seemed very pleased, but somewhat to my astonishment showed no surprise at the change in my plans; and for a moment or two a swift suspicion crossed my mind.

Did they—or Niābon at least—*know* that it was Mrs. Krause who had brought this boat to my notice? Had Mrs. Krause said anything on the matter to Niābon herself? I determined to ask.

“Niābon,” I said in English, which Tematau also understood fairly well, though he never spoke it, “tell me truly—did you or Tematau ever speak to Lucia of this boat which I have just bought?”

“No, never, Mr. Sherry,” she replied calmly, and the quiet dark eyes met mine with such an expression of truthfulness that I was instantly ashamed of my transitory suspicion. “I have never spoken to her about this boat, and never has Tematau, I am sure.”

“Oh, well, it was a very lucky thought of hers,” I said; “we have now a boat that will be much better than my own, which I must try and sell, for we shall want money, Niābon, we shall want money badly in the strange country to which we are going, and I have but little.”

“Kaibuka and the head men will buy the other boat, I think.”

“How do you know?” I said in surprise, for I had never even been approached on the subject of selling my boat.

“I will ask them to buy it,” she replied, with a smile. “I will go to them now, if you wish. How much money do you want?”

“The boat is worth two hundred dollars, but I will take one hundred. If they cannot give me one hundred dollars I will take no less—but because they and I are good friends, I will give it to them freely, for it will be of no further use to me.”

“They will buy the boat,” she said confidently, and lighting her cigarette, she went out.

A quarter of an hour later she returned, accompanied by old Kaibuka and another head man. Each of them carried a small bag of money, which they handed to me, and simply observing that it was the price of the boat, sat down and waited for me to count the coins. I found there were two hundred dollars.

“There are one hundred dollars more than the price I asked,” I said, pushing one-half of the money apart. “The boat is well worth the two hundred; for she is but new, and cost me more than that. But one hundred is all I asked for.”

Hawk-eyed Kaibuka—one of the most avaricious old fellows I had ever met with in the South Seas—shook his head and said I was trying to wrong myself. The people would be glad to get such a fine boat for two hundred dollars, and that if he and the other head men announced that I had parted with her for a hundred dollars, the entire population of Utiroa would arise as one man and curse them as mean creatures; also they (the people) would refuse to use the boat, and he, Kaibuka, would be regarded as a hog—a man devoid of gratitude to the white man who had been kind to and had not cheated them.”

“Take the money, Mr. Sherry,” said Niābon in

English; "they are glad to get the boat; and if I had said you wanted five, instead of one hundred dollars, they would give it. I would *make* them give it."

"Very well, Niābon. I'll take it. But as it is more than I ought to expect under the circumstances, I will give them half a tierce of tobacco as a *mea alofa* (a gift of friendship).

"That means that you give them a hundred and twenty-five dollars' worth of tobacco as a present," she said, with an amused smile, "and so you sell your beautiful boat for seventy-five dollars."

"Never mind my extravagance, Niābon," I said, in the same spirit; "the one hundred and twenty-five pounds of tobacco in the half-tierce, which only cost me a quarter of a dollar a pound, is better given away to these people than left here to rot."

"Indeed it is," she replied, as she watched Tepi and Pai roll out the half-tierce of the beloved tobacco from my trade-room into that in which we were sitting; "these people here will never forget you."

As soon as old Kaibuka and the other head man had left—each after taking a stiff glass of grog—and the house was again quiet, Niābon, Tepi, and I set to work to take stock, they calling out the various articles of my trade goods whilst I made out the list. We worked at this throughout the night, had an early breakfast, and then went at it again, and by nine o'clock the work was over, and I knew how I stood with my employers financially.

It was pretty satisfactory, considering the short time I had been on the island; for with my salary of ten

pounds a month, and the five per cent. commission I was allowed on all the goods I sold, there were over three hundred pounds due to me. Then, in addition to my cash takings, which came to over three thousand dollars, I had bought over a hundred tons of copra (dried coco-nut) at a very low price, paying for it with trade goods—muskets, rifles, ammunition, tobacco, and liquor—on which latter article my esteemed employers made something like a thousand per cent. profit. Of course I had had a big pull over Krause, whose stock of trade was almost exhausted when I landed, whilst I had come ashore with half a schooner-load. But apart from this, it was a fillip to my vanity to think that even if Krause had had his store packed from floor to roof with trade, the natives would rather have come to me than to him, for as I have said, they all—even those in his own village of Taritai—disliked him for his domineering German-like manner, and his contemptuous disregard of their feelings, whilst I was *persona grata* with them from the day I landed. But I had never yet, in all my ten years' experience of the South Seas, either seen, or heard, of any "Dutchman"—as we English and American traders call all Teutons—who was liked by the natives.

I closed up my account-books, and, lighting my pipe, considered the situation. Firstly, I was certainly breaking my engagement with my employers by leaving the island without giving them "due notice of one month"; but as I could only communicate with them once in eight months, when they sent a ship round the group, that particular item in my agreement did not disturb my

mind to any great extent. Secondly, there was a nice little sum of money due to me—over three hundred pounds—which in all probability I should never get if I awaited my firm's good pleasure to pay me, unless I went to Sydney and brought legal pressure to bear on them. Would not I be perfectly justified in paying myself my salary and commission out of the money in my possession? They would certainly look on me as an ass of the first water if I did not—of that I was sure. But again, I must not leave it in their power to say that "Jim Sherry had bolted from Tarawa," and had not acted squarely with them.

Niäbon, I knew, could both read and write English fairly, so of course could Mrs. Krause. The latter would be at Utiroa in a few hours, and instead of starting them at sewing sails I would get them to make an exact copy of every entry in the station books from the day I took charge to the day we left the island. This copy I would leave behind, and take the books themselves with me. The idea was a good one, and later on I was glad it occurred to me.

The whaleboat was my own, and as I thought of her, I felt pleased that my employers, who were as mean as Polish Jews, would not get to windward of me as far as she was concerned. I had bought her from the captain of an American whaler, intending her for my own personal use and pleasure as a fishing boat, naturally expecting that the firm would provide me with a boat for trading purposes, *i.e.*, to send around the lagoon and collect copra. The boss supercargo, however, who had drawn up the agreement, refused to do so, on the grounds

that I had a boat already, and I was too weak and too racked with the damnable pains of fever to make more than a brief protest against what was certainly a very mean trick. But I had now sold her to the natives, and old Kaibuka was not a man to be trifled with. If any supercargo or captain of the firm endeavoured to claim her as property belonging to Utiroa Station, there would be such a blazing row that the firm would not forget it—they could never again land a trader on the island.

I decided to at least take a hundred pounds out of the station cash—less than a third of the amount due to me. This, with the two hundred dollars I had received from old Kaibuka, would make seven hundred dollars—something better than poor little Mrs. Krause's twenty, I thought with a smile. And I meant that she—if we succeeded in reaching Guam—should land there with five hundred American dollars, not Chili or Bolivian half-iron rubbish, but good honest silver.

At noon Mrs. Krause arrived in my old whaleboat, which I had borrowed from the new owners, and sent away at daylight, and whilst she and Niābon set to work at copying the books, I, with Tepi, began cutting out the new suit of sails from a bolt of light but very strong American twill—just the very stuff for boat sails, as strong as No. 1 canvas and four times lighter.

That was the first of eight or ten very pleasant days we spent together, it taking us all that time to complete our preparations; for after the sails were finished I had to rig the boat anew, caulk her decks, and make a proper cabin amidships for the two women. This would have taken me more than another week had it not been



WHEN I HAD FINISHED AND LAUNCHED HER, WE MADE A TRIAL TRIP OVER TO
MRS. KRAUSE'S STATION.

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for a couple of native boatbuilders, whom old Kaibuka had sent to me. They were good workmen, though neither had ever handled such a thing as a plane or saw in his life—everything was done either with a hatchet or a *toki*—a plane-iron or a broad chisel lashed to a wooden handle in such a manner that it was used as an adze. Then I gave her two good coatings of red lead from keel to above water-line, and above that painted her white. The people from whom I had bought her told me frankly that she was a poor sailer, and I quite believed them, for she was altogether too heavily built for her size—her timbers and planking being of German oak. Her mast, too, had been placed too far for'ard, and so I shifted it eighteen inches or two feet further aft. But heavy and clumsy-looking as she was, I was sure she would prove a good sea boat, for she had great beam and a corresponding floor—in fact, rather too much for her length. However, when I had finished with and launched her, we made a trial trip over to Mrs. Krause's station, and I was well satisfied with her. She sailed much better than she did formerly, owing to the mast being further aft, and her new mainsail and jib, though smaller than the old ones, setting better.

On our reaching Taritai, Mrs. Krause sent for the head men and told them that she was now satisfied that her husband was dead. What did they think? she asked. They replied that there could be not the slightest doubt of it. Every islet of the whole chain encompassing the lagoon had been searched, but not the slightest trace of the missing man had been found. He was dead.

Then she told them that as I was leaving the island, and she did not care to remain now that her husband was dead, she had decided to go away with me and my party. The trading station itself, and all her late husband's property, she would leave in their care, to hand over to the captain of the next German ship that came to take away the copra and oil that he had bought. And as it might be many months before a ship did come, she would pay them in advance for their caretaking; and also leave a letter with them for the captain, asking him to make them a further present, as she knew they were good men and would be true to their trust. Let them, to-morrow, come and choose from the store goods to the value of two hundred dollars.

The head men were delighted, and one of them, in his exuberance, expressed the sorrow they all felt at her leaving them; but no doubt, he said, she and I were going to some island where there was a missionary, so that we might be married according to the customs of white people. Perhaps, however, we would return.

The poor little woman turned scarlet, and I shot a furious glance at the offender, and sharply told him that he was talking like a child instead of a grown man, and that his words had hurt the lady greatly. He put his hand over his eyes and collapsed. Then after a little further talk with them, we sent them away, and I arranged with Mrs. Krause to send the whaleboat for her on the following morning; for, all going well, we should start at sunset.

Before I left her, she asked me, with a nervous tremor in her voice, to read the letter she had written, and if I



THEN I GAVE HER TWO GOOD COATINGS OF RED LEAD FROM KEEL TO ABOVE WATER LINE, AND, ABOVE THAT, PAINTED HER WHITE.

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thought it would do, or needed to be altered in any way. It was a letter which I had suggested she should write and leave with the head men. It was addressed to "The captain or supercargo of any ship belonging to Messrs. G——, of Hamburg," and contained but a few lines, stating that her husband, "Ferdinand Alexis Krause, left this station on the 27th July last for Mr. James Sherry's station at Utiroa village, and has not since been seen, and although a most careful search has been made, no trace of him has been found, and the natives are of the opinion that he was drowned between here and Utiroa in crossing one of the channels between the islets. As I am not equal to the task of carrying on my late husband's trading business, and an opportunity of leaving the island presents itself to me, through the kindness of Mr. Sherry, a trader here, I have placed this station in the care of the head men. I have given them two hundred dollars in trade goods, and trust you will be so satisfied with their integrity and their care of the property I have entrusted to their charge, that you will make them a further present. I make no claim whatever on the money due to my husband, and will feel glad if you will see that it is sent to his relatives in Germany."

"That will do very well," I said, as I took her hand; "now, goodbye till to-morrow evening, Mrs. Krause. By this time to-morrow we should be getting under way. And, do you mind?—I have called the boat the *Lucia*—in fact I've painted the name on both bows."

"Indeed, I am very proud. And why don't you call me *Lucia*, too, Mr. Sherry? Every one else does."



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“Very well,” I said, with a laugh, “I will talk Tarawan to you: Tiākāpo, Lucia.”

“Tiākāpo, Simi;” and her voice was pleasant and sweet to hear, although the word *tiākāpo* meant nothing more than “good-night.”



CHAPTER IX

EVERYTHING was ready at last, water, stores, arms, and ammunition, and the boat, with mainsail and jib hoisted, was lying just abreast of the station, in charge of Tematau and Tepi, surrounded by canoes.

In the house with me were Mrs. Krause and Niäbon ; and Kaibuka and his head men, who had come to take formal charge of the station, and to bid us farewell. I handed old Kaibuka letters to be given to the supercargo of the firm's next vessel, presented him and his colleagues with a new musket each, together with powder and bullets, and a small case of tobacco, and then we all went outside, and I locked the door formally, and handed him the key. He took it, unlocked the door, went inside a few steps, and then it was locked a second time, the key twisted in one of his pendant earlobes, and the ceremony was over. Then we all trooped down to the beach together, got into a canoe, and went on board.

Shaking hands with old Kaibuka and the rest of the natives who swarmed around us to say farewell, I told Tepi to lift the anchor, and in another five minutes the little craft began to move through the water towards the reef, accompanied by thirty or forty canoes and native

boats under sail, all packed with natives of both sexes, shouting their farewells, and wishing us good fortune.

By sunset we had crossed over the wide, submerged reef, which for twenty miles runs due north and south on the lee side of Tarawa Lagoon, and hauling up to the wind just as darkness fell, we soon lost sight of our island friends, though we could still hear them shouting our names—"Simi," "Niābon," "Lucia," for some little time after.

The night was dark, but fine, and the light southeasterly breeze sent us along at about three knots over a very smooth sea. Tepi was standing for'ard on the lookout, for fear we might run into any fishing canoes from Taritai, Tematau was busying himself about our miniature galley, my two women passengers were rearranging their little cabin, and I steered.

"Well, here we are at last, Mrs. Krause——" I began.

"Lucia, please."

"Here we are at last, Lucia, then. I'm going to run along like this all night, until we get to the little island at the north end, and then put these grunTERS ashore," and I pointed to half a dozen pigs which were lying tied up on the deck. They had, with about fifty or sixty fowls, been presented to us by the natives, and as we should have given great offence by not accepting them, we had to endure their company for the present. Then all around us, stowed in every conceivable place, were bundles of young drinking coco-nuts, husked and unhusked, taking up a great deal of room, and weighing heavily, and three or four rolls of sleeping-mats, presented



THE LITTLE CRAFT BEGAN TO MOVE THROUGH THE WATER . . . ACCOMPANIED BY THIRTY OR FORTY CANOES AND NATIVE BOATS UNDER SAIL. [To face p. 78.





to Niābon, were wedged into the cabin. All this collection would have to be either got rid of entirely or largely reduced, so I decided to bring up at the little islet of which I had spoken, and overhaul and re-stow the boat by daylight.

“Look astern,” cried Lucia, as I shall now call her; “isn’t it pretty? And see, there is another fleet ahead of us, and much nearer.”

The canoes we had left behind us had begun their flying-fish catching, and a long line of brightly burning, isolated flames was lighting up the sea all around, revealing the dark bodies of the fishers, with four paddles sending each canoe through the water, while in the bows stood a fifth, sweeping the water deftly with a scoop net attached to a pole twelve feet in length, his movements guided by a huge torch or flare of dried coco-nut leaves, held aloft by a naked boy standing on the canoe platform amidships. It was indeed a pretty sight, for at times the long line of fires would make a graceful sweeping curve, and then almost unite in a circle, then again open out with a fan-like movement, and advance once more. We watched the fleet astern a little while, and then found ourselves in the midst of the one we had seen ahead. There were over fifty canoes, all manned by Taritai people. They hailed us vociferously, wished us good luck, and as we sailed through their blazing lines of fire they threw so many flying-fish on board that not only the decks were covered, but hundreds, striking against the mainsail, fell into the cabin, and lay there like moving bars of brightest silver.

“*Tiakapo, Simi ; Tiakapo, Lucia ; Tiakapo, Nia-*

bon!” they shouted to us, as we drew away from them, after throwing them some tobacco.

By daylight we were abreast of the islet, and due north of us could just see the tops of the coco-nuts on Apaian Lagoon showing above the sea-line, ten miles distant, and then, to our annoyance, the wind died away, and there was every indication of there being a dead calm till the evening. However, it could not be helped, so we pulled in right up to the beach, and let the two women step ashore to get breakfast ready. Tepi, picking out the youngest and fattest of the pigs, knocked it on the head, and cutting the thongs of the others tumbled them over the side. They soon recovered themselves, and went off. Then followed a massacre of a dozen of the fowls, the liberation of the rest, and the throwing away of the greater portion of the heavy coco-nuts. The bundles of mats I threw ashore to Niäbon, as they would be useless to shield us from the rain which might fall during our stay on the island, and then we set to and washed down decks, made everything snug, and went ashore for breakfast, well satisfied with our work, and with the fact that the boat was six inches higher out of the water.

The islet, though small, was unusually fertile for so low-lying a spot—it being in no part more than fifteen feet above high-water mark—for in addition to the inevitable coco-palms, which grew thickly from the water's edge, there were hundreds of fine trees, among them being some noble and imposing jack-fruits, whose broad, bright green branches were almost level with the crowns of the palm-trees, their roots embedded in a rich,



THE CANOES WE HAD LEFT BEHIND US HAD BEGUN THEIR
FLYING-FISH CATCHING.

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soft, black soil, formed by the fallen leaves of hundreds of years, mixed with decayed coral detritus.

Niābon had spread the mats in a shady spot, and we all made a simple but hearty breakfast of grilled fowls, biscuit, and young coco-nuts. Then we lit our pipes and cigarettes of the good, strong black tobacco, and watched a shoal of fish leaping and playing about the boat, which, with loose, pendant cable, lay floating on a sea as smooth and as shining as a polished mirror.

The island, so Niābon told me, had not been inhabited for a great number of years, though it was occasionally visited by natives for the purpose of collecting the ripe coco-nuts, and turning them into oil, and sometimes the white traders, living on Apaian, would stop there when they were on their way to Tarawa and Maiana Lagoons. The name of the island, she said, was Te Mata Toto ("The Bloody Eye").

"Why such a name?" I asked.

"I will tell you some other time," she replied; "not now, because I do not want Tepi to hear me talking about the place. With Tematau it would not matter, for although he knows the story, he is not a Tarawa man, and has nothing of which he need be afraid."

We sat talking together for some little time, and as I looked at Lucia I could not but wonder at the marvellous manner in which she was recovering her health and strength. Her pallor, once so very manifest, had disappeared, as well as her languid step, and at this moment she was merrily reproving Tepi for smoking a pipe so old and dirty and so short in the stem that it was burning his nose.

The big man grinned, and said it was a lucky pipe. For when it was white, new, and long, and he was smoking it for the first time, he, with two other men, was fishing from a canoe, it fell from his mouth into the sea, and before he could dive for it was swallowed by a *kura* (rock-cod).

“How know you?” she asked.

“Because my mother found it in the belly of one of those we caught, when she was cooking it,” he replied promptly.

Presently Niābon, who knew exactly to the smallest detail where everything was stowed in the boat, told him to look in one of the stern lockers for the fishing tackle, where he would find a small hand casting net, with which he and Tematau could go catch some grey mullet, while she, Lucia, and myself, walked round the island.

Bringing my gun with me—for there were great numbers of small golden plover flying past us towards the sand patches now being revealed by the ebbing tide, we started off, Niābon leading, and conducting us directly towards the centre of the islet, which was less than three-quarters of a mile from shore to shore, and was the northernmost of a chain of five or six, almost connected with each other at low water, and forming the northern horn of the lagoon. A short walk brought us to a small cleared space, enclosed by some heavy timber. The ground was devoid of any foliage with the exception of some straggling, thorny bushes, growing up between the layers of what seemed to be a solid bed of coral slabs cast up by the action of the sea during heavy storms long years before.



“It was once a deep hole and was used as a well, long, long ago,” said Niābon, “but the bones of seven white men lie there under the stones. Their bodies were thrown into the well, and then for two days some of the people of Tarawa threw stones upon them till the hole, which was five fathoms across from its sloping banks, and a fathom and a half down to where the fresh water lay, was filled, and only a flat surface of stones was to be seen. Come, let us get away to the other side, for the air here is hot and foul from the smell of the damp soil underneath these big trees. It is never dry, for the sun cannot get to it.”

We gladly followed her, and soon reached the other side of the island, which faced the lagoon, of which we had a glorious view as far as eye could see. Then Niābon told us the story of the well—a story that, horrible as it was, was but a counterpart of many such tragedies which had taken place all over the North and South Pacific, more especially after the settlement of New South Wales, in 1788, and when sandal-wooding and whaling brought hundreds of ships into the South Seas, the former being too often manned and commanded by some of the greatest ruffians who ever dangled from the end of a rope.

The story was told to her by old Kaibuka, who himself had participated in the massacre, which had been planned and executed under the direct supervision of his father, his uncle, and himself. And it was not the only such affair in which he had been concerned—not on Tarawa alone, but on the neighbouring lagoon of Maiana. From Niābon he had concealed nothing of his past life,

and I honestly believe could not have done so had she wished otherwise, for the old fellow showed his respect and fear for her and her powers of "seeing beyond" to the same degree as did every other one of his people—man, woman, or child. Niabon imagined that this particular case of cutting-off occurred about forty or fifty years previously, for Kaibuka told her that although he was young at the time, he was yet a full-grown man; but as he could not even guess at his present age, she had no very reliable data.

The island, he told her, was called Te Mata Toto (The Bloody Eye of the Land) from its being the northern eye or point of the lagoon, from which a watch was always kept in olden times to give warning to the inhabitants of the large villages on the opposite side of the approach of their hereditary enemies—the people of Apaian. The moment a fleet of canoes were seen crossing the ocean strait which divides the two islands, signal fires, always kept in readiness, were lit, and the villages would prepare to resist the invaders, who sometimes, however, would content themselves with an assault on the outpost stationed on the little island. As they generally outnumbered the defenders by ten to one, there was usually but one result—every one of the garrison was slaughtered, and the victors, after stripping the dead bodies of their valued armour of coco-nut fibre, and destroying their canoes and houses, would return to Apaian satisfied. For this reason—*i.e.*, the many sanguinary encounters which took place on the little island—it was given its ominous name.

One day Kaibuka was sent to command a party of



SHE CAME BOLDLY ON AND DROPPED ANCHOR CLOSE TO THE SHORE.

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ten men who formed the garrison and who were keeping a keen watch—for a raid was again expected—when a small, square-rigged vessel was seen heading for the island. She came boldly on, and dropped anchor close to the shore, lowered a boat, and five men came on shore. They were all armed, and at first were cautious about advancing up the beach to Kaibuka and his men, but seeing that the latter possessed no firearms, they came on, and Kaibuka, throwing down his club and spear, walked down and shook hands with them in a very friendly manner, and was at once addressed by one of them in the Gilbert Island tongue, though he could not speak it very well. He told Kaibuka that the ship was going to China, and that he was a passenger; that he had been living on Temana (an island far to the south-east) but had tired of it, and so, when the ship called there to get some food, of which she was badly in want, he came away with her, the captain, in return for his services as interpreter, promising to give him a passage to the island of Makin, where were living four or five white men. He then asked Kaibuka if there was any drinking water on the little island, and any food—of any kind whatever—to be obtained.

The white men were at once taken and shown the well, at which they were very pleased, and two of them went back to the ship for water-casks, the others remaining on shore bartering with Kaibuka's people for some fish, a turtle, and coco-nuts, paying for them in tobacco and knives, and promising them a keg of rum if twenty turtle and a boat-load of full-grown coco-nuts were brought them within a few days. Turtle, however, were

scarce, but Kaibuka said that there were a good many captive ones in the turtle ponds at the main village, and he would send over for some. And then his brain began to work. He suggested that two or three of the white men should go with his messenger; but they were too wary, and made excuses, which Kaibuka took in seeming good part, saying it did not matter, but that he would send a man over at once to his father to tell him to bring as many turtle as could be obtained. The captain and interpreter were satisfied with this, and returned on board, declining to let any of the curious natives come with them—on the plea that they would be too busy repairing some water-casks which they hoped Kaibuka and his men would help fill in the morning.

Then the young chief called to his messenger.

“Tell my father and my uncle that I can see but seven men altogether on the ship, but each one carries a gun, pistol, and cutlass, and two are always on guard. Tell him, too, to bring some turtle and fish, and let some young women who can dance well come with him as well. But my uncle and some of our best men must follow in their canoes at night, and make no noise. They must land and hide in the bush, and stay there till my father speaks.”

Early on the following morning the captain again landed, and was pleased to find Kaibuka's father, accompanied by some unarmed men and eight or ten handsome young women, awaiting him on the beach. He had, he said, brought but five turtle that day, but would fetch an equal number or more on the morrow if they could be obtained. The captain was pleased. Fresh food, he



said, he was very anxious to obtain, as they had nothing on board but salt beef and mouldy biscuit. He gave old Takai (Kaibuka's father) some tobacco, and a knife, and said that the young women might go on board and dance for the amusement of the sailors. This was exactly what the old man desired, for he could, from them, obtain definite information as to the condition of affairs on board the ship, for it was very evident that the captain was determined not to be led into fancied security by the friendly demeanour of the natives, but meant to keep himself and crew well prepared to resist a surprise.

During this time the young Kaibuka and the interpreter—the white man from Temana—had become quite friendly, and that evening, whilst the young women were still on board, he came on shore alone, and calling Kaibuka aside from the other natives, said he wanted to speak to him privately. As soon as they were alone, he boldly avowed his intention of capturing the ship, and murdering all the other white men if Kaibuka and his people would assist him. The matter, he said, could be easily done. He and some other white men—two of whom were now living at Makin Island—had once stolen a ship when they were prisoners in Van Diemen's Land, had killed five or six soldiers and some of the crew, and sailed away with her to Fiji; and they had got much plunder from her.

“What is to be got from *this* ship?” asked Kaibuka, who had heard this particular story from some traders and knew it to be true.

“Casks and casks of rum, and kegs of powder and

bullets, hundreds of muskets, swords, knives, and axes and beads—all that man can want—for this ship is going to a far-off cold country to barter these things for furs."

Kaibuka then inquired what share of the plunder he and his people should have if they captured the ship.

Half, replied the white man. Half of everything that was in the ship's hold and in the cabin, except some small square boxes of silver money—ten in all—for which he (Kaibuka) would have no use. And he could have two of the four big guns on the deck if he wished; but the ship herself was not to be harmed, nor any of her sails or rigging taken away. And Kaibuka would lend him two or three men to sail her to Makin, where he (the white man) would reward them well, and where they could remain till some ship brought them back to Tarawa.

"It shall be done," said the young man; "come with me to my father and his brother, so that we may talk together."

The murderous plot was soon arranged between the three, and the treacherous convict went off on board again to tell the unsuspecting captain that the old chief was anxious that he (the master) would let some of his men come on shore in the morning with axes and cut down a very large tree growing near the well. It was too great an undertaking for the natives with their poor tools—it would take them a week, but the sailors could do it in half a day. Old Takai wanted the tree cut down so as to build a large canoe.

The poor captain fell into the trap, the interpreter

assuring him that the natives would not dream of attempting any mischief. Were not some of the young women still on board? he asked, which was a proof of the amicable intentions of the old chief and his people. Furthermore, he added, all the men had that night returned to the mainland to secure more turtle, and only the young women, a few boys, and the chief himself remained on the island.

Early in the morning the captain came on shore with three men, to fell the tree, leaving two only on board, with orders to be on their guard if he fired a shot, or they suspected anything was wrong. The interpreter accompanied him, and to show his confidence in the islanders he ostentatiously, but with seeming carelessness, threw his arms down at the foot of a tree, remarking to the captain that the old chief and boys and women seemed rather frightened at the sight of four armed white men, who also carried axes. Somewhat unwillingly the captain and his men followed suit, and then even permitted the children to carry their axes for them.

The interpreter walked on ahead with the old chief, apparently talking on nothing of importance, but in reality telling him with great glee of how he had succeeded in lulling the captain's suspicions. Presently the whole party reached the thicket in which the well was situated, and as the path was narrow they had to walk in single file, the children who were carrying the axes falling behind. And then suddenly, and almost without a sound, thirty or more stalwart savages, led by the young Kaibuka and his uncle,

leapt on the unsuspecting white men, who in a few seconds were clubbed to death before even they could utter a cry.

“Now for the two on the ship,” cried the renegade to young Kaibuka; “go, one of you women, down to the shore, near the ship, and cast a stone into the water as if at a fish, and the women on board, who are watching, will kill them as easily as we have killed these.”

As he turned, an axe was raised and buried in his brain, and he pitched head foremost down the bank into the well—dead.

“Let him lie there,” said one of the leaders; “throw the others after him, and wait for two more.”

The two poor seamen on board the ship were ruthlessly slaughtered by the women in a similarly treacherous manner, their bodies brought on shore, thrown down into the well with those of their shipmates and the renegade, and the whole depression filled with sand and coral slabs, till it was level with the surrounding soil.

Whilst this was being done by one lot of savages, another was looting the vessel of her cargo of trade goods, which was rapidly transferred in canoes to the mainland. Then, as her capturers feared to set fire to her, knowing that the blaze would be seen by the natives of Apaian, ten miles away, they managed to slip her cable, after cutting a large hole in her side at the water-line. Long before sunset she was still in sight, drifting on a smooth sea to the westward; then she suddenly disappeared, and nothing was ever known of her fate, and of the awful ending of her hapless captain and crew,

except what was known by the perpetrators of the massacre themselves.

Such was Niābon's story of *Te Mata Toto*, and both Lucia and myself were glad to get away from the immediate vicinity of the tragedy, and return to our camping place near the boat, where we found both Tematau and Tepi awaiting us with some fine mullet, which I supplemented later on by a few plover. In the afternoon, whilst the women slept, the two men and myself cleaned our firearms, and attended to various matters on the boat. At sunset the breeze came away freshly from the old quarter—the south-east—and by dark we were at sea again, heading due north for Makin, the most northerly of the Gilbert Group, which was eighty miles distant, and which island I wanted to sight before keeping away north-west for the Caroline Archipelago, for there was a long stretch between, and I was not too brilliant a navigator.



CHAPTER X

HOWEVER, we were not to see Makin Island, for about midnight the wind chopped round to the north—right ahead—and by daylight we had to reef down and keep away for the south point of Apaian, in the hope that by running along the east coast for a few miles we might get shelter. But we found it impossible to anchor owing to the heavy sea running; neither could we turn back and make for our former anchorage, which was now exposed to the full strength of the wind and sweep of the sea. We certainly could make the passage at the north end of Tarawa—near the Island of the Bloody Eye—and run into the lagoon, where we should be in smooth water; but we did not want to go back to Tarawa, under any circumstances—my own pride, quite apart from my companions' feelings, would not let me entertain that idea for an instant. To attempt to beat back round the south point of Apaian, and get into Apaian Lagoon would be madness, for the sea in the straits was now running mountains high, owing to a strong westerly current, and the wind was steadily increasing in violence; and even had it not been so, and we could have got inside easily, would either Lucia



or myself have cared to avail ourselves of its security. For Bob Randall, the trader there, would be sure to board us, and Bob Randall, one of the straightest, decentest white men that ever trod in shoe leather, would wonder what Mrs. Krause was doing in Jim Sherry's boat! He and I had never met, but he knew both Krause and Mrs. Krause. No, I thought, that would never do.

All this time we were hugging the land as near as we could, first on one tack, then on the other, hoping that the weather would moderate, but hoping in vain, for the sky was now a dull leaden hue, and the sea was so bad, even in our somewhat sheltered situation, that we were all more or less sea-sick. I got my chart and studied the thing out. Sixty miles due south of us was Maiana Lagoon—a huge square-shaped atoll, into which we might run, and have the boat plundered by the natives to a certainty. That was no good. No, if the gale did not moderate, there was but one course open to me—to run before it for Apamama, a hundred and thirty miles to the S.S.E., which meant two hundred and sixty miles of sailing before we laid a course for the N.W. And then the delay. We might be tied up by the nose in Apamama Lagoon for a week or more before we could make another start. I rolled up the chart, wet and soddened as it was with the rain beating on it, and angrily told Tematau, who was steering, to watch the sea, for every now and then the boat would plunge heavily and ship a caskful or two of water over the bows.

“We are in a bad place here, master,” he replied, quietly; “’tis the strong current that raiseth the high sea.”

I knew he was right, and could not but feel ashamed of my irritability, for both he and Tepi had been watching the boat most carefully, and I there and then decided what to do, my ill-temper vanishing when I saw Mrs. Krause and Niābon bailing out the water which had come over the hatch coamings into their cabin.

"This is a bad start for us, Lucia," I said cheerfully; "we can't dodge about here under the lee of the land with such a sea running. I am afraid that there is no help for us but to make a run for it for Apamama. What do you think, Niābon?"

She looked at me with a smiling face, and rising to her feet steadied herself by placing her hands on the after-coaming of the hatch. Her thin muslin gown was wet through from neck to hem, and clung closely to her body, and as her eyes met mine, I, for the first time in my life, felt a sudden tenderness for her, something that I never before felt when any woman's eyes had looked into mine. And I had never been a saint, though never a libertine; but between the two courses, I think, I had had as much experience of women as falls to most men, and I had never yet met a woman who seemed to so hold and possess my moral sense as did this semi-savage girl, who, for all I knew, might be no better than the usual run of Polynesian girls with European blood in their veins. But yet at that moment, I felt, ay, I *knew*, though I could not tell why, that she was *not* what she might well have been, when one considered her past environment, and her lonely unprotected situation—that is, lonely and unprotected from a civilised and conventional point of view; for with the wild races among

whom she had dwelt since her infancy, she had always met with full, deep, and ample protection, and love and respect—and fear.

“Thou art the captain, Simi,” she said in Samoan, “and thou alone canst guide us on the sea. And I think, as thou dost, that we must sail before the storm to Apamama; for when the wind comes suddenly and strong from the north, as it has done now, it sometimes lasteth for five days, and the sea becomes very great.”

“’Tis well, Niābon,” I answered, with a laugh, meant more for Lucia than for her; “we shall turn the boat’s head for Apamama, and lie there in the lagoon in peace till the gale hath died away.”

And then we wore ship, and in another hour were racing before the gale under the jib and an extemporised foresail of a mat lashed to two short oars, the lower one fast to the deck, and the upper one, eighteen inches or so higher, to the mast stays. This lifted the boat beautifully, and made her steer ever so much easier than had I tried to run her with a close-reefed mainsail, for the lopping seas would have caught the boom, and either capsized us or carried the mast away, and yet I had to keep enough canvas on her—jib and mat foresail—to run away from the toppling mountains of water behind us. I had never had such an experience before, and hope I may never have one like it again. Every few minutes we would drop down into a valley as dark as death, with an awful wall of blackness astern, towering over us mountain high, shaking and wavering as if it knew not the exact spot whereunder we, struggling upward, lay helpless in the trough, awaiting to be sent

to the bottom if we failed to rise on the first swelling outlier of the black terror astern.

How we escaped broaching to and foundering in that wild gale will always be a wonder to me, for the boat, although she did not ship much water, seemed so deadly sluggish at times that looking astern made my flesh creep. All that night we went tearing along, and glad enough we were when day broke, and we saw the sun rise. The wind still blew with great violence, but later on in the morning the sky cleared rapidly, and at nine o'clock, to our delight, we sighted Apamama a little to leeward, distant about eight miles, and in another hour we raced through the north passage and brought-to in smooth water under the lee of two small uninhabited islands which gave us good shelter. From where we were anchored we could see the main village, which was six miles away to the eastward, and I quite expected to see visitors coming as soon as the wind fell sufficiently to permit of boats or canoes beating over to us, and determined to give them the slip if possible, and get under way again before they could board us and urge me to come and anchor on the other side, abreast of the village.

My reasons for wishing to avoid coming in contact with the people were shared by my companions, and were based on good grounds.

The ruler of Apamama, King Apinoka, was, although quite a young man, the most powerful and most dreaded of all the chiefs of the islands of the mid-Pacific, and he boasted that in time he would crush out and utterly exterminate the inhabitants of the surrounding islands



HOW WE ESCAPED BROACHING TO AND FOUNDERING IN THAT WILD GALE WILL ALWAYS BE A WONDER TO ME.

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unless they submitted to him, and for years past had been steadily buying arms of the best quality. He had in his employ several white men, one of whom was his secretary, another was a sort of military instructor, and a third commanded a small but well-armed schooner, and it was his (the king's) ambition to possess a steamer, so that he could more easily and expeditiously set out on his career of conquest. The revenue he derived was a very large one, for the island contained hundreds of thousands of coco-nut trees, and all day long, from morn till night, his subjects were employed in turning the nuts into oil or copra, which he sold to trading vessels. A thorough savage, though he affected European dress at times, he ruled with a rod of iron, and he had committed an appalling number of murders, exercising his power and his love of bloodshed in a truly horrifying manner. For instance, if one of his slaves offended him, he would have the man brought before him and order him to climb a very tall coco-nut tree which grew in front of the king's house and throw himself down. If the poor wretch hesitated, Apinoka would then and there shoot him dead ; if he obeyed, and threw himself down, he was equally as certain to be killed by the fall—sixty feet or more. Wherever he went he was surrounded by his bodyguard, and his haughty and domineering disposition was a general theme among the white traders of the Pacific Islands. To those captains who supplied him with firearms he was liberal to lavishness in the favours he conferred ; to any who crossed him or declined to pander to him, he would be grossly insulting, and forbid them to ever come into the lagoon again.

His house was a huge affair, and contained an extraordinary medley of articles—European furniture, sewing machines, barrel organs, brass cannon and cannon-balls, cuckoo clocks, bayonets, cutlasses, rifles, cases and casks of liquor, from Hollands gin to champagne, and fiery Fiji rum to the best old French brandy. His harem consisted of the daughters of his most notable chiefs, and occupied a house near by, which was guarded day and night by men armed with breechloaders, who had instructions to shoot any one who dared to even look at the king's favourites.

And yet, strangely enough, the very people over whom this despot tyrannised were devotedly attached to him; and many trading captains had told me that he was "a real good sort when you got to know him." One of these men a few years later conveyed Apinoka and five hundred of his fighting-men to the neighbouring islands of Kuria and Aranuka—two of the loveliest gems of the mid-Pacific—and witnessed the slaughter of the entire male population, Apinoka sparing only the young women and the strongest children, keeping the former for himself and his chiefs, and the children for slaves. As might have been expected, there were always plenty of renegade and ruffianly white men eager to enter into his service, in which they could give full fling to their instincts of rapine and licentiousness.

I had never seen Apinoka nor any of his European hangers-on, and had no desire to make his or their acquaintance, so I anxiously watched the weather and had everything ready to get under way the moment we could do so with safety. But though it was smooth

enough inside the lagoon, the wind continued to blow with undiminished violence, and even had it moderated there was such a terrific sea tumbling in through the narrow passage, that it would have been a most risky undertaking to have attempted to beat out against a head wind, with such a heavy, sluggish boat. Had I known what was to happen I should have risked it ten times over.

At noon, whilst we were having our midday meal, Tematau, who was standing for'ard, scanning the eastern shore of the atoll, said he could see a boat coming towards us, beating up under a reefed mainsail and jib.

"It is one of Apinoka's boats, Simi," said Niābon, "for there is no trader in Apamama; the king will let no one trade here."

"Well, we can't help ourselves," I said, as I looked at the boat through my glasses; "she is beating up for us—there is no doubt about that. I daresay we shall get rid of them when they find out who we are."

Niābon shook her head, and by their faces I saw that both Tepi and Tematau did not like the idea of our awaiting the coming boat.

"What can we do?" I said, with childish petulance. "We cannot go to sea in such weather as this, and get knocked about uselessly."

"Master," said big Tepi gravely, "may I speak?"

"Speak," I said, as I handed my glasses to Lucia—"what is it?"

"This master. These men of Apamama be dangerous. No one can trust them; and they will be rude and force themselves upon us, and when they see the

many guns we have on board they will take them by force, if thou wilt not sell them at their own price."

"Let them so try," I said, in sudden anger at the thought of a boatload of King Apinoka's crowd of naked bullies coming on board and compelling me to do as they wished: "I will shoot the first man of them who tries to lay his hand on anything which is mine."

Tepi's black eyes sparkled, and all the fighting blood of his race leapt to his cheeks and brow, as he stretched out his huge right arm.

"Ay, master. And I too desire to fight. But these men will come as friends, and their numbers and weight will render us helpless in this small boat. Is it not better that we should hoist the anchor and run before the wind to the south passage, gain the open sea, and then come to anchor again under the lee of the land until the storm is spent?"

His suggestion was so sensible that I felt annoyed and disgusted with myself. Of course there was a south passage less than ten miles distant, and we could easily run down to it and bring to outside the reef, and either lay-to or anchor in almost as smooth water as it was inside. But I would not let Lucia or Niābon think that I had forgotten about it; so I spoke sharply to poor Tepi, and told him to mind his own business. Did he think, I asked, that I was a fool and did not know either of the south passage or my own mind? And so I let my vanity and obstinacy overrule my common sense.

"Get thy arms ready," I said to Tematau and Tepi, "and if these fellows are saucy stand by me like men.

I shall not lift anchor and run away because Apinoka of Apamama sendeth a boat to me."

Now, I honestly believe that these two men thought that there would be serious trouble if I was so foolishly obstinate as to await the coming boat, when we could so easily lift anchor, rip down the lagoon, and be out through the south passage and in smooth water under the lee of the land in less than an hour; but at the same time they cocked their eyes so lovingly at the Sniders and Evans's magazine rifles which Niäbon passed up to me that I knew they were secretly delighted at the prospect of a fight.

Niäbon said something in a low voice to Lucia, who then spoke to me, and said nervously—

"Please do not think I am a coward, Mr. Sherry. But do you not think it is better for us to get away?"

"No, I don't," I answered so rudely that her face flushed scarlet, and her eyes filled with tears; "I shall stay here if fifty of King Apinoka's boats were in sight." And as I spoke I felt a strange, unreasoning fury against the approaching boat.

I picked up an Evans rifle—we had two on board—filled the magazine, handed it to Niäbon, told her to lay it down in the little cabin, out of sight, with the other arms—three Snider carbines, my breechloading shotgun, and three of those rotten pin-fire French service revolvers—the Lefauchaux. My own revolver was a Deane and Adams, and could be depended upon—the Lefauchaux could not, for the cartridges were so old that twenty-five per cent. of them would miss fire. Years before, at a ship chandler's shop in Singapore, I

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had bought twenty of these revolvers, with ten thousand cartridges, for a trifling sum, intending to sell them to the natives of the Admiralty Islands, who have a great craze for "little many-shooting guns," as they call repeaters; but the cartridges were so defective that I was ashamed to palm them off as an effective weapon, and had given all but three away to various traders as curiosities to hang upon the walls of their houses.

As the boat drew near I saw that she was steered by a white man, who sailed her beautifully. He was dressed in a suit of dirty pyjamas, and presently, as the wind lifted the rim of the wide Panama hat he was wearing, I caught a glimpse of his features and recognised him—Florence Tully, one of the greatest blackguards in the Pacific, and whom I had last seen at Ponape, in the Carolines. As he saw me looking at him, he took off his hat and waved it.

"That is 'Florry' Tully, Jim," said Lucia. "I have often seen him. He is the man who shot his wife—a native girl—at Yap, in the Carolines, because she told the captain of a Spanish gunboat that he had been selling arms to the natives."

"I know the fellow too," I said; "the little scoundrel used to be boatswain of Bully Hayes's brig, the *Leonora*. Hayes kicked him ashore at Jakoits Harbour, on Ponape, for stealing a cask of rum from the *Leonora*, and selling it to the crew of an American whaler."



AND THEN TULLY . . . BROUGHT HER ALONGSIDE IN SUCH A MANNER
THAT I COULD NOT BUT ADMIRE AND ENVY HIS SKILL.

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CHAPTER XI

FIVE minutes later the boat, which was crowded with natives, went about like a top, and then Tully—as fine a sailor man as ever put hand to a rope—brought her alongside in such a manner that I could not but admire and envy the little blackguard's skill. The boat itself was kept in fine order, and was painted like all the king's miniature fleet—white outside, and bright salmon inside. One glance at his boat's crew showed me that they were all armed—in a flashy melodramatic style, like the Red Indians of a comic opera, each naked native having a brace of revolvers buckled to a broad leather belt around his waist, from which also hung a French navy cutlass in a leather sheath. They were all big, stalwart fellows, though no one of them was as tough a customer to deal with as our Tepi, who eyed them with undisguised enmity as he caught and made fast the line they heaved aboard.

Little Tully, red-headed, red-bearded, unwashed, and as dirty generally as a pig from his own County Down, jumped on board and extended his filthy paw to me effusively.

“Wal, now, I jest am surprised to see you, Jim Sherry,” he said with the “Down East” drawl he affected—he called himself an American—“why, we

haven't seen one another fer quite a stretch. Naow, tell me, where air you from, and where air you goin' ? ”

“ From Tarawa, and bound to Taputeuea ” (an island a hundred miles to the south), I replied curtly, my temper rising, as suddenly catching sight of Lucia and Niabon, he stared rudely at the former, then grinned and held out his hand to her. She touched it coldly with ill-disguised aversion.

“ Why, you too, Mrs. Krause ! Wal, this is surprisin'. And where are *you* goin' ? Where's the boss ? ”

“ Mr. Krause is on Tarawa,” she replied quickly, “ and he has chartered Mr. Sherry's boat to take me to Drummond's Island ” (Taputeuea), “ where there is a German barque loading for Samoa.” The latter part of her remark was quite true, and Tully knew it.

“ That is so, the *Wandrahm*. She's been lying there nigh on four months. And so you goin' ter Samoa, eh ? Wal, I wish I was goin' there myself ; but I've got a rosy berth here—I'm boss of King Apinoka's fleet of trading boats, an' live like a fightin' cock.”

I was about to ask him to have a glass of grog, just out of mere civility and island custom, when Tematau and Tepi made a sudden movement, and turning, I saw that they were trying to prevent three or four of Tully's boat's crew from coming on board.

“ Tell your men to keep to their boat, please,” I said sharply. “ My two men don't understand the ways of these Apamama people, and they'll be quarrelling presently.”

“ Why, certainly, Jim,” he said, with such oily effusiveness that I longed to kick him over the side ;

“but there ain't no need for your men to be scared. My crew on'y want to hev' a bit of a gam * with yours—thet's all.”

He told his men to stay in the boat, but I saw him give them a swift glance, and prepared myself for the next move. Tepi was watching him keenly; Tematau went for'ard and began splitting kindling wood in a lazy, aimless sort of a way, but I knew that he, too, was ready. Still I felt that we were in a tight place—three men against ten, exclusive of Tully. However, I tried to appear at my ease, and asked him to have a drink. Niabon passed us up a half-bottle of brandy, two tin mugs and some water.

My visitor tossed off his liquor, and lit a cigar, offering me another.

“This is a fine lump of a boat,” he said, running his eye over the deck, and then trying to peer into the little cabin; “you wouldn't care about sellin' her, I guess.”

“No,” I replied, “not now, at any rate. Must fulfil my charter first. But I am open to an offer when we come back from Drummond's Island. I suppose you want her for the king.”

“That is so. He's keen on getting better and bigger boats than those he has, and will sling out the dollars for anything that takes his fancy—like this one will. Won't you run down with her now, and let him have a look at her? It'll be a lot better than lyin' up here, and the king wants to see you.”

I detected the suppressed eagerness in his voice as he made his request, and pretended to think for a few

* Whalerman's parlance for gossip.

moments, blaming myself for my folly in not clearing out when we could have done so easily.

"No," I said slowly, as if I had considered the matter, "I think we'll lay here for to-day anyway. But I don't see why I could not run down early to-morrow. Do you think the king could spare me about fifty fathoms of $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch line? I want some badly."

"Of course—I'll give it to you myself. But I partickler want you to come back with me rightaway, ez Apinoka will jest be ragin' mad with me if I go back by myself. You see, he's going away to the south end of the lagoon at daylight on a fishin' trip."

"Well, I'll run down to the town in the morning and wait till he returns," I said, inwardly boiling at the man's persistency. "A day or two days' delay won't matter to me, and I think I'll put the boat up on the beach and get a look at her underneath—I think some of her seams want caulking. That will take one day at least, and then we might just as well be lying high and dry on the beach instead of being half-drowned outside, running before this northerly."

The little devil was disappointed—that could be seen by his face—and I was also pretty sure did not believe my talk about the rope I wanted and the caulking to be done. But I was now burning with anxiety to get rid of him and his boatload of naked bullies. Once they were well away from us, I would get up anchor and make sail for the south passage and get to sea again.

"Well, just as you please," he said sullenly, as he helped himself to another brandy. "I suppose I must get back." Then he asked me if I had any rifles to sell.

"No. We only have enough for ourselves. Oh, where's the water? Niäbon, some water please."

He started and looked hard at the girl. "Is that there gal the witch woman?" he asked quickly, staring at her steadily. "'Niäbon' you called her, didn't you? Where is she goin'?"

"With Mrs. Krause," I said shortly.

"Great Caesar's sea boots! Apinoka and his people know all about her. He'll be mighty glad to see her. She's derved good-lookin' too. Why, I thought——"

He jumped to his feet and told his boat's crew that "Niäbon" was on board, and in an instant every one of them was staring at her and calling out her name, and one of them, bolder than the rest, made a gesture to her to get into the boat. I pretended not to notice it, and Niäbon herself told them that we were all very tired and wanted sleep, but that in the morning she would talk with them all at the village—when we came to see the king. They seemed satisfied, but a deal of whispering went on—and I felt certain that had Tully given them the word, they would have there and then rushed us and captured the boat.

"Wal, I must be goin'," said Tully at last; "when do you think you'll be down? The king will be mighty vexed at not seein' you to-day."

"It's only eight miles across," I said carelessly, "so I daresay we'll be there about seven in the morning, before breakfast. But," I added, to allay his suspicions, "the weather may take up a bit this afternoon; if it does, I'll come along rightaway, after we have had a sleep."

He said that the chances were that it would take up, as the wind was hauling more to the eastward, which meant rain, and once rain fell the wind would fall too.

We had a third drink, and I passed a couple of bottles of square-face over to his crew, and then, to our intense satisfaction, Tully went over the side into his own boat, which at once pushed off, and in a few minutes was slipping over the lagoon towards the big village, Tully waving his dirty Panama hat to us as he stood grasping the steer oar. I almost fancied I could see him grin evilly at me.

"Simi," said Niäbon as she watched the receding boat, "let us get away from here quickly. That man Florry means ill to us, for I saw his eyes gleam when, as Lucia sat down on the mats under which the rifles are hidden, he heard them rattle together."

Tepi and Tematau joined her in her assertion that Tully meant mischief and would seize the boat for the king, who would have no compunction in resorting to violence or murder to achieve his object, especially with a man like Tully to carry out his wishes. Tepi also said that once the king knew that Niäbon was on board he would use every effort to gain possession of her. Then, too, the firearms we carried were a further incentive to treachery—the king's mania to increase his stock of arms and ammunition being well known.

"Very well," I said to Lucia, "I'm quite as anxious as any one of us to get away. Let us wait, however, till Tully's boat is well down the lagoon."

"Master," said Tepi, "do not delay. See, the wind is falling, and rain—much rain—is close to from the

east, and the rain killeth the wind. And this is a heavy boat to move with oars."

He was quite right, for, as Tully had said was likely, the wind was not only falling, but was going round to the eastward. The sooner we got out of Apamama Lagoon the better.

"We'll loose the mainsail then," I said to Niäbon, "and we'll get away. But we won't hoist it yet. We'll up anchor and drift until the rain comes—it will be on us in a quarter of an hour, and Tully won't be able to see anything of us till we are abreast of the passage; and we may get out to sea without any one seeing us at all."

We got the anchor up, and with mainsail and jib all ready for hoisting, let the boat drift, and in another quarter of an hour a dense rain squall came down on us from the eastward with just enough wind in it to send us along at a smart pace as soon as we hoisted our sails. In less than an hour we were pretty close to the passage; for, although we could not see it owing to the rain, we felt the force of the swift current running out, and could hear the subdued roar of the dangerous tide-rips. Tematau was for'ard, holding on to the fore-stay and peering ahead. Suddenly he gave a cry of alarm and shouted to me to luff.

It was too late, for almost at the same time we struck with a crash, and the current, catching the boat's stern, slewed her round broadside on to the reef, where she lay hard and fast, though shaking in every timber as a wall of water, hissing like a boiling cauldron, formed against her starboard side.

Bidding the women sit quite quiet, we let go main

and jib halliards and got the sails inboard—no easy task under the circumstances. The water was not very deep, less than three feet, and every moment was decreasing in depth as the tide rushed out. This was fortunate for us in one respect, for we could at least see what damage had been done when she struck and possibly make it good; but on the other hand we should have to stick where we were till the flood tide, and I was horribly afraid of the rain clearing off and revealing us to the natives.

However, there was no use in meeting trouble half-way, so we waited patiently for half an hour, when the reef became bare and we could make an examination of the boat's bottom—on one side at least. It did not take us long to discover that no great harm had been done—she had struck fairly stem on to a patch of growing coral, which was better than hard rock—and beyond carrying away a bit of her false keel, and deeply scoring the bow planking, there was nothing else we could see at which to grumble.

I was considering what was best to be done—the whole five of us could not even move so heavy a boat an inch—when to my disgust the rain suddenly cleared, and I saw that we were aground on Entrance Island, with a native village staring us in our faces less than a quarter of a mile away! And almost at the same moment we saw ten or a dozen men walking over the reef towards us. Through my glasses I saw that they were carrying nets and fish baskets, and I felt relieved at once; the moment they saw us they dropped their burdens and came on at a run. None of them were armed.



THROUGH MY GLASSES I SAW THEY WERE CARRYING NETS AND FISH BASKETS.

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CHAPTER XII

“THEY are some of the king’s fisherfolk,” said Tepi, scanning them closely; “that is their village. Only fishermen and two of the king’s pilots live here. I have heard them spoken of many times.”

“Then they are just the very fellows we want,” I said to Lucia; “there’s enough of them, with us, to put the boat off this ledge into the water again. They’ll be here in a few minutes. Niäbon, do you think we can be seen from the king’s village? I can see the houses there quite plainly.”

“I fear so, Simi,” she replied.

“Then we must make these fellows who are coming to us work hard. I’ll pay them well for it if they get us afloat again in another hour. Let me do all the talking. Take my glasses and let me know the moment you see a boat coming. We must not be caught here like this; and the tide won’t turn for another hour at least.”

There were eleven natives, and when they were close to I noticed with satisfaction that most of them were sturdy, well-built fellows. They came up to us, and we all shook hands, and before even asking them to

help me, I inquired if they would like some grog to dry their skins.

Lucia had a quart bottle of Hollands all ready, and in less than five minutes it was empty, and our visitors said I was a noble-minded and thoughtful man.

“Friends,” I said, “behold me and my friends—and this our boat cast upon the reef like a stranded porpoise. Wilt help us float again, so that we may get to the king’s town to-night and sleep in peace? And I shall pay every man twenty sticks of rich, sweet tobacco and four bottles of grog between thee.”

My munificent offer was received with acclamation, though at first they wanted a preliminary smoke and gossip, but I bade them hurry.

“No time have we for talk now, friends,” I said, jocularly slapping one of them on his brawny shoulders; “’tis but this morning the king sent a white man to me in his own boat to bid me welcome; and, as we hurried down the lagoon, that devil’s rain sent me astray, so that the boat was caught in the current and swept down into the passage, where we struck, as thou seest.”

My explanation was quite satisfactory, and they went to work with a will, lightening the boat—after a first and fruitless attempt to move her—by taking out all our water, stores, &c. We were but fifty or sixty feet away from the edge of the channel; and in half an hour, by our united effort, had dragged her half the distance, when Niabon beckoned me to her.

“There are two boats half-way down the lagoon,” she said in a low voice: “one is that of Tully, and

they are using both sails and oars. See, they are plainly in sight."

I jumped back again amongst the natives. I knew that they would have already seen the coming boats had they not been toiling so hard, so I called to Niabon to open another bottle of grog and serve it out.

"Hurry, hurry, O strong men," I cried, as we moved the boat another foot astern, "else shall I be laughed at by the king's white men, for two boats are coming. And instead of twenty it shall be forty sticks of tobacco each if ye get this boat in the water before the king's men are here to laugh at me."

The poor beggars were working like Trojans, their naked bodies streaming with perspiration, as Niabon held out to each of them half a pannikinful of raw gin, which was tossed off at one swallow. Then both she and Lucia, who was now on the reef, began digging the promised tobacco out of a case with sheath knives.

"Don't bother to count the sticks!" I cried, as the boat made a sudden move and was kept going for nearly a dozen feet. "Toss out about half of the case and be ready to jump on board and get under cover."

At last, with a yell of satisfaction from the natives, the stern post was seen to be over the ledge of the coral, and then with one final effort the boat went into the water with a splash like a sperm whale "breaching."

"Now, in with everything," I shouted to Tematau, as one glance showed me the two boats, now less than half a mile away, coming along at what seemed to me to be infernal speed.

Tematau and the natives made a rush at the boxes of stores, bundles of sails, water breakers, and everything else, and tumbled them on board anyhow, Lucia and Niäbon taking the lighter articles from them and dropping them into the cabin, so as to give us more deck room, whilst I ran up the jib, and big Tepi the mainsail.

"Take all the loose tobacco there, my friends," cried Niäbon to the fishermen, who with panting bosoms stood looking at us as if we had all gone mad, "and here are the four bottles of *rom*."

One of them sprang to the side of the boat just as I, feeling every moment that I should drop with exhaustion, pushed her off with an oar into deep water. And then we heard a chorus of yells and cries from the two boats, as we eased off the jib and main sheets, and Niäbon put her before the wind. Then *crack! crack!* and two bullets went through the mainsail just below the peak, and I heard Tully's voice shouting to me to bring to again.

"Come aft here, you two," I cried to Tepi and his mate; "get out the guns, quick. Sit down in the cabin and fire, one on each side of me."

I did not speak a moment too soon, for the leading boat suddenly lowered her sail, took in all her oars but two, and began firing at us at less than three hundred yards, and every bullet hit us somewhere, either in the hull or aloft. Then they took to their oars again, and I saw that unless we could knock some of them over she—and those in the second boat as well—would be aboard of us in a few minutes, for there was now but

little wind and the strength of the ebb tide was fast slackening.

Tematau and Tepi each fired two or three shots in quick succession, but missed, and then a very heavy bullet struck the side of the coaming of the steering-well in which I was seated, glanced off and ploughed along the deck, and the second boat now began firing into us with breechloading rifles of some sort.

"Let me try," I said to Tematau, clambering out of the well into the cabin. "Go and steer, but sit down on the bottom, or you'll be hit."

Niäbon handed me my Evans' rifle in the very nick of time, for at that moment Tully stood up in the stern sheets of his boat and, giving the steer oar to a native, began to take pot shots at Tepi and myself. I waited until my hand was a bit steady, and then down he went headlong amongst his crew. I knew I could not possibly have missed him at such a short distance.

"Good!" cried Niäbon exultingly, as both Tepi and myself fired together and three of the native paddlers who were sitting facing us, rolled over off their seats, either dead or badly wounded, for in an instant the utmost confusion prevailed, some of the crew evidently wanting to come on, and the others preventing them. By this time the first boat was within easy pistol range; the other, which was much larger and crowded with natives, being about forty yards astern of her, but coming along as hard as she could, two of her crew in the bows firing at us with a disgusting kind of a foreign army rifle, whose conical bullets were half as big as pigeon's eggs, and made a deuce of a noise, either when

they hit the *Lucia*, or went by with a sort of a groan-like hum.

"Take this," I said to Niābon, giving her my Deane and Adams pistol, "and do you and Tepi keep off those in the nearest boat if they come on again."

But she waved it aside, and seizing Tematau's carbine, stood up and sent her first shot crashing through the timbers of the boat.

"Quick, Tematau," I cried, "get another rifle and fire with me at the second boat. Let ours come to the wind—it matters not."

Picking out one of the two fellows who were shooting so steadily at us from the bows of their boat, I fired and missed, but another shot did for him, for he fell backwards and I saw his rifle fly up in the air and then drop overboard.

This was enough for them, for the steersman at once began to slew her round, and then he too went down as a bullet from Tematau took him fair and square in the chest, and we saw the blood pouring from him as he fell across the gunwale. In another ten seconds they were paddling away from us, leaving the other boat to her fate.

"That is enough," I cried to Tepi, who I now noticed for the first time was bleeding from a bullet wound in the left arm, which had been hurriedly tied up by Lucia, "that is enough. Put down your gun. There is now no one in the second boat shooting at us."

"They are lying down in the bottom," said Niābon, "we can see them moving, but some have dived over-



I WAITED UNTIL MY HAND WAS A BIT STEADY, AND THEN DOWN HE
WENT HEADLONG AMONGST HIS CREW.

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board, and swum ashore. See, there are four of them running along the reef."

"Let them go, Niäbon," and then I turned to Lucia. She was deathly pale, but had all her wits about her, for although she could barely speak from excitement, she had some brandy and water ready for us.

"Thank you," I said, as I poured a stiff dose into the pannikin, and taking first pull, passed it on to Tepi and the other man. "Now we must have a look at that boat. We can't leave wounded men to drown."

The wind was now very light, but the boat was so near that we were soon alongside and looking into her. There were three dead, two badly wounded, one slightly wounded man, and one unhurt man in her. The latter looked at us without the slightest fear, even when Tepi, picking up a carbine, thrust the muzzle of it almost into his face. Niäbon gently took the weapon from Tepi's hand, laid it down and waited for me to question our prisoner.

"Is the white man dead?" I asked.

"Ay, he died but now. The bullet went in at where the ribs join."

To make sure that Tully was really dead I got down into the boat. He was lying on his face and was dead enough, though he had evidently lived until a few minutes previously.

I jumped on board the *Lucia* again, and looked anxiously around. There was still a light air, but the tide was now setting in, and I did not want our boat to be carried back into the lagoon again. Then I turned

to the prisoner, and asked him if he could tell me why he ought not to be shot. He made a gesture of utter indifference, and said he didn't care. Did I think he was a coward, he asked? Could he not have swum ashore? The king would kill him to-morrow.

Pitying the poor wretch, I gave him a pipe, tobacco, and matches, and told him to help my men put the dead and wounded men on the reef, as I wanted the boat. The people at the fishing village, who had been watching the fight throughout from a safe distance, were within sight, so telling the prisoner he must go to them and get them to carry their dead and wounded up to the houses before the tide covered the reef again, I sent him off with Tematau, Tepi, and Niābon. Their gruesome task was soon done, and the boat rid of her ensanguined cargo; then as soon as she came alongside again, I called Niābon on board, and telling her to steer, went into the smaller boat and took the *Lucia* in tow.

As we slowly crept out through the passage, we saw the fisher folk come down to the reef, and, lifting up the three dead men, carry them away, others following with the wounded. It was not a pleasant sight to see, nor even to think of, now that it was all over, and so we none of us spoke as we tugged at the oars.

We got outside at last, and then ceased towing, as a light air carried us well clear of the outer reef. Coming alongside, we stepped on board, after having pulled out the boat's plug. Then we watched her drift astern to fill.

At dawn when I was awakened, after a good four

hours' sleep, Apamama was thirty miles astern of us, and we were running free before a nice cool breeze, steering N.W. for Kusaie Island, the eastern outlier of the Carolines, eight hundred miles away.

The two women had not heard me move, and were both sound asleep, their faces close together and their arms intertwined.



CHAPTER XIII

WE were thirteen long weary days between Apamama Lagoon and Kusaie, whose misty blue outline we hailed with delight when we first sighted it early one afternoon, forty miles away.

Calms and light winds had delayed us greatly, for as we crawled further northward, we were reaching the limit of the south-east trades, which, at that time of the year, were very fickle and shifty. Not a single sail of any description had we seen, though we kept a keen lookout night and day; for, after being ten days out from Apamama, I began to feel anxious about our position and would have liked to have spoken a ship, fearing that the current, in such calm weather, would set us so far to the westward that I should have difficulty in making the island if we once got to leeward of it.

Day after day had passed with the same unvarying monotony—light winds, a calm, then a brisker spell of the dying trades for a few hours, or a day at most—then another calm lasting through the night, and so on.

But our spirits very seldom flagged, and we contrived to make the time pass somehow. Lucia, whose face and hands were now browning deeply from con-



tinuous exposure to the rays of a torrid sun worked with Niäbon at dressmaking, for she had brought with her half a dozen bolts of print; and, as they sewed, they would sometimes sing together, whilst I and my two trusty men busied ourselves about the boat—scrubbing, scraping and polishing inside and out, cleaning and oiling our arms; or, when a shoal of bonita came alongside, getting out our lines and catching as many of the blue and marbled beauties as would last us for a day or two. But our chief relaxation, in which the two young women always joined us, was two or three hours of “sailors’ pleasure” *i.e.*, overhauling all our joint possessions, clothing, trade goods of all sorts, and carefully restowing them in the boxes in which they were packed.

Tepi’s wound by this time was quite healed—the bullet had gone clean through the fleshy part of his arm, and then struck an oar which was lashed to the rail. He had got a nail from me and drove it through the lead into the wood—to be preserved as a memento of the fight.

On the evening of the day on which we sighted the blue peaks of beautiful Kusaie, the sky began to look ugly to the eastward, and at daylight it was blowing so hard, with such a dangerous sea, that I decided not to attempt to enter the weather harbour—Port Lelé—though that had been my intention, but to run round to the lee side to Coquille Harbour, where we could renew our fresh provisions, spell a day or two, and be among friends, for I knew the people of Kusaie pretty well.

We got into the smooth water of Coquille just in time, for no sooner had we dropped anchor at the mouth of a small creek which debouched into the harbour through a number of mangrove islets, than it commenced to blow in real earnest, and terrific rain squalls drenched us through and made us shiver with cold.

The natives, however, had seen us, and presently, as soon as the rain ceased, three canoes appeared, each manned by five men. They welcomed us very heartily and urged us to come to the village—which was less than a quarter of a mile away. We were only too delighted to get ashore again after thirteen days' confinement on our little craft, so hurriedly packing a couple of boxes with dry clothing, and some articles for presents for the people, we put on the cabin hatches, made everything else snug on board, and half an hour later were all in the chief's house, warm and dry, and telling him and his family as much about ourselves as we thought advisable.

As soon as it could be cooked, they brought us an ample meal of hot baked fowls, pigeons, and fish, with a great quantity of vegetables—taro, yams, breadfruit, and sweet potatoes. The very smell of it, Tepi whispered to me, made his teeth clash together!

We remained with these hospitable people for four days. There was nothing that they would not do for us—no trouble was too great, no labour was aught but a pleasure to them. They brought the *Lucia* round to a small sandy beach near the village, discharged her, carried everything up to the houses, and cleaned her



THERE WAS A GLORIOUS SILVER MOON IN A SKY OF SPOTLESS BLUE.

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thoroughly inside and out, and then put her in the water again for us. When we bid them farewell and sailed, the boat's deck was covered with baskets of freshly-cooked food and a profusion of fruit, and Lucia and Niābon were accompanied on board by every woman and girl in the place, some of whom wept unrestrainedly, and begged them not to venture their lives in such a small boat, but to remain on the island till a ship touched there, bound to the islands of the further north-west.

Before finally parting with our kind friends I gave them twenty pounds of tobacco, which, though we had still four hundredweight left, was still our most valuable trade article, and would have to be disbursed carefully in future, and Lucia gave the chief's daughter a very handsome gold ring of Indian manufacture, though at first the girl declined accepting so valuable a present.

We lost sight of Kusaie within ten hours, for we had a slashing breeze, which carried us along in great style, and all that night we sat up, none of us caring to sleep, for there was a glorious silver moon in a sky of spotless blue, and the sea itself was as a floor of diamonds.

Niābon and Lucia, I must mention, had insisted on standing watch ever since we had left Apamama, and they certainly helped us a lot, for both could now steer very well, and took pleasure in it. The former, with Tepi, was in my watch, the latter was with Tematau, who, like all Eastern Polynesians, was a good sailor-man and could always be relied upon.

We had now sailed over a thousand miles; and every day—every hour I gained more confidence in myself, and

the resolution to make one of the greatest boat voyages across the Pacific had been ever strengthening in my mind since the day I looked at Chart No. 780 in Krause's house at Taritai.

What could I not do with such a boat and two such men as Tepi and Tematau, after we had landed Lucia and Niābon at Guam in the far north! We would refit the boat, and then turn our faces south once more, and sail back through the Western Carolines on to wild New Guinea—Dutch New Guinea, and run along the coast till we came to one of the few scattered Dutch settlements on the shores of that *terra incognita*. Tepi and Tematau would stick to me—they had sworn to do so—had told me so in whispers one bright night, as we three kept watch together and Lucia and Niābon slept.

Niābon! What a strange, strange girl she was! I should find it hard to say goodbye to her, I thought; and then I felt my cheeks flush.

Say goodbye to her—part from her! Why should we part? Was I so much her superior that I need be ashamed of asking her to be my wife? What was I, anyway, but a broken man—a man whose father, my sole remaining relative, had nearly twenty years before told me with savage contempt that I had neither brains, energy, nor courage enough to make my way in the world, thrown me a cheque for a hundred pounds, and sneeringly told me to get it cashed at once, else he might repent of having given it to me to squander among the loose people with whom I so constantly associated. And I had never seen or heard from him,



and never would. But I had that cheque still, for there always was in me a latent affection for the cold-faced, unsympathetic man who had broken my mother's heart, not by open unkindness, but by what the head gardener whisperingly told me (when she was lying dead, and I, sent for from college to attend the funeral, went to his cottage to see him) was "silent, invisible neglect, Master James; silent, invisible neglect. That's wot killed her." For the servants loved my poor mother—their opinion of my father they discreetly kept to themselves. So I had kept the cheque, for burning with resentment against him as I was at the time, I remembered the words of my mother's last letter to me, written with her dying hand.

"Try hard to please him, James. He is very cold and stern, but I am sure that, deep down in his heart, he loves you well."

That letter, with the cheque inside it, was now yellowed, and the writing faint, but I had kept them both. I would write to him some day, I had thought, and send him back the cheque, and my mother's letter as well, and then perhaps the hard old man would forgive me, and write and say "Come." But the years went by, and I never wrote, and now it was too late, after fifteen had passed. Very likely he was dead, and had willed his money to churches or hospitals, or some such charities, and I should always be "Jim Sherry, the trader," to the end of my days, and never "James Shervinton, Esq., of Moya Woods, Donegal."

Well, after all, what did it matter? I thought, as I

held on to the forestay, and looked at the now paling moon sinking low down on our lee, as the glow of the coming sun tipped a bank of cloud to windward, with a narrow wavering ribbon of shining gold. I had nothing at which to grumble. My fifteen years of wandering had done me good, although I had not saved money—money, that in my father's eyes brought, before eternal salvation in the next world, primarily the beatitudes of some county eminence in Ireland and British respectability generally in this. Unless my father was still alive, and I could know he wanted to see me before he died, I should never go home—not after fifteen years of South Sea life.

Why should I not accept what Fate meant for me, and my own inclinations told me that I was destined for? I was intended to be "Jim Sherry, the trader,"—and I should ask "Niābon, of Danger Island," to be "Jim Sherry's" wife. Why not. I had never cared for any woman before except in a fleeting, and yet degrading manner—in a way which had left no memories with me that I could look back upon with tender regrets. She and I together might do great things in the South Seas, and found a colony of our own. She had white blood in her veins—of that I felt certain—and where Ben Boyd, of the old colonial days, failed to achieve, I, with a woman like Niābon for my wife, could succeed. Ben Boyd was a dreamer, a man of wealth and of flocks and herds, in the newly-founded convict settlement of New South Wales, and his dream was the founding of a new state in the Solomon Islands, where he, an autocratic, but beneficent ruler, would reign



supreme, and the English Government recognise him as a Clive, a Warren Hastings of the Southern Seas. But the clubs of the murderous Solomon Islanders—the country of the people in which he had already planned out vast achievements on paper—battered out his brains almost under the guns of his beautiful armed yacht, the *Wanderer*; and the name of Ben Boyd was now alone remembered by a decayed village and a ruined lighthouse on the south headland of Twofold Bay, in New South Wales, where, in the days of his prosperity, he had erected it, as a guide to the numerous American and English whaleships, which in those times traversed the Pacific from one end to the other, and would, he imagined, eagerly avail themselves of the quiet, land-locked harbour to repair and recruit, and sell their cargoes of sperm oil. But they never came, and his dream was ended ere his life was gone.

Yes, I would ask her, as soon as I had an opportunity of speaking to her alone. It was true that she had once told me that she would never part from Lucia—and Lucia had often spoken to me of their plans for the future.

But, my vanity whispered, she would listen to me. She cared for me, I was sure, and would not long hesitate. We were certain to meet with at least one missionary going through the Carolines, and he would marry us. If we did not, it would not matter—there were half a dozen Spanish priests in Guam. Then after our marriage I would go on in the boat to Amboyna, where I had a business friend, a rich trader—a man who liked and trusted me, and who would give me a thou-

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sand, ay, two thousand pounds' worth of trade goods for my pencilled I.O.U. in his notebook. Then I would buy a little schooner, and sail with Niäbon to the islands of the south-eastern Pacific, and begin trading. I would make Rapa, in the Austral Group, my head station, or else Manga Reva in the southern Paumotus—Niäbon should decide.

The low cloud to windward lifted, the red sun leapt from the sea-rim, and then I felt a soft hand on my arm.

"What are you thinking of, Jim? I called you twice, but you did not hear. I believe you were talking to yourself, for I twice saw you throw out your arm as if you were speaking to some one."

"I believe I was, Lucia," I replied with a laugh. "I was day-dreaming."

"Tell me, Jim," she said softly, so softly that her voice sank to a whisper.

"Not now, Lucia. Wait till we get to the next land." And then in all innocence I added, as I looked at her, "How bright and happy you look, Lucia! I think you grow more beautiful every day."

She lifted her eyes to mine for one instant, and I saw in them a light I had never seen before.



AT SEVEN O'CLOCK, JUST AS WE WERE ENTERING IT, WE SAW A BARQUE LYING ON THE REEF ABOUT HALF A MILE AWAY TO THE NORTHWARD.

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CHAPTER XIV

“*TE fanua, te fanua! te fanua umi, umi lava!*”
 (“Land, land! a long, long land!”)

As we, the “watch below”—Niäbon, Tepi, and myself—heard Tematau’s loud cry, we sat up, and saw a long, dark line pencilled on the horizon right ahead, which we knew was the great lonely atoll named Providence Island on the charts, and called Ujilon by the natives of the North-Western Pacific.

It was daylight of the sixth day out from Kusaie, and as I stood up to get a better view of the land I was well satisfied.

“We have done well,” I said exultantly to Lucia, who was steering: “three hundred and forty miles in five days—with a two-knot current against us all the way!”

I did not know my way into Ujilon Lagoon, for I had never been there before, so I now had some trouble in picking up one of the two passages on the south side of the great atoll. At seven o’clock, just as we were entering it, we saw a barque lying on the reef about half a mile away to the northward. She was a good lump of a vessel—apparently of about seven or eight hundred

tons, and the remnants of some of her upper canvas still fluttered to the breeze. We could discern no sign of life about her, nor were any boats visible; but we had no time to examine her just then, so sailed on across the lagoon, and, instead of dropping anchor, ran gently on to the beach of a densely wooded island, for the water was not only as smooth as glass, but very deep, the "fall" from the edge of the beach being very steep.

In an hour we had lightened the boat sufficiently to float her along a narrow water-way, which wound a sinuous course through the solid coral rock into a little basin or natural dock, where we could board her at either low or high water, without wetting our feet, though she had a clear fathom of water under her keel.

The lagoon seemed alive with large and small fish—none of which, Niābon said, were poisonous, like two thirds of those of the Marshall Island atolls, and the beaches and sand-flats were covered with small golden-winged plover, who displayed not the slightest fear of our presence, letting us approach them within a few yards, then rising and settling down again. From where we were we could see but seven of the chain of fifteen islands which comprised the atoll; all of these were thickly covered with coco palms, bearing an enormous crop of nuts, and here and there groves of jack-fruit and pandanus broke the monotonous beauty of the palms by their diversity of foliage.

No traces of natives were visible, though I knew that there were a few—about thirty all told—for the redoubtable Captain Bully Hayes, who claimed Ujilon as his own, and whose brig was the first ship to enter the

lagoon, had I knew established friendly intercourse with them. Two years before, I had met the famous captain at Anchorite's Islands—to the north of the Admiralty Group—when he had given me a description of Ujilon and its marvellous fertility, and had tried to induce me to go there with him with a gang of natives, and make oil for him. But although he made me a most liberal offer—he was a most delightful man to talk to, was the "South Sea pirate"—I did not trust him well enough, despite his merry, laughing blue eyes, jovial voice and handsome face, for he was a man who could be all things to all men; and the blue eyes sometimes went black, and the smooth, shapely hand that was for ever stroking the long flowing beard, liked too well to feel a trigger in the crook of its forefinger. So I laughingly declined his offer—even when, as an extra inducement, he pointed out to me a very handsome young Marshall Island girl, who would do the station honours for me at Ujilon.

"All right, Mr. Sherry," he said, "please yourself;" and then over another bottle of wine, he gave me some further particulars about the great atoll, and told me of how it had taken him two months to get into communication with the few inhabitants; and of the particular island on which their village was concealed amid a dense grove of pandanus palms. But that was two years ago, and I had forgotten much that he had told me. However, as I intended to remain at Ujilon for two or three days, it was likely that we might come across them—they were very quiet and inoffensive people, so there was no danger to be apprehended from a meeting.

By noon we had our temporary camp made comfortable, and were having dinner when five natives made their appearance—three men and two women—coming towards us in a canoe. They landed without the slightest hesitation, and sat down with us; but we found that they spoke the Marshall Island dialect, which none of us but Niābon could speak, and she but slightly. However, we managed to worry along, and to our surprise learned that Hayes had been at the island in his famous brig, the *Leonora*, only a month before, and that for a year and six months previously, seventy Line Island natives had been working on the islands under the supervision of a white man, making oil for the captain, but most of them, and the white man as well, had left the atoll in the brig, for Hayes had been so well pleased with the result of their work that he invited forty of the seventy to come on board and go with him to Ponapé, in the Carolines, for a month's recreation and "feasting" on that beautiful island. So with forty of his sturdy Line Islanders, and seven hundred barrels of coco-nut oil, he had sailed; and now, said our five friends, he would soon be back—perhaps in two days—perhaps in ten, or twenty, or more, for how could one tell what the winds would be? He was a good man, was the captain, but hot and sudden in his anger, overfond of women who were good to look at, and cruel to those who sought to cross his desire; but generous—always generous—and kind to those who were weak and ill, giving them good medicine and rich food; tins of the red rich fish called *samani* which came from his own country, and biscuit and bread such as white men



WITH FORTY OF HIS STURDY LINE ISLANDERS, AND SEVEN HUNDRED
BARRELS OF COCO-NUT OIL, HE HAD SAILED.

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eat. Ah, he was a good man was "Puli Ese" (Bully Hayes).

"Ask them about the wretched ship on the reef," I said to Niäbon, repeating the first question I had tried to put to them, but which they did not answer, so eager were they to tell us about Captain Hayes and themselves; "ask them all about her—when did she run ashore, and where are the crew?"

Ah, the ship, the great ship! they replied. She had run up on the reef one night four moons ago, when the sky was bright and clear, and the wind blew strongly; and when in the morning they discerned her from the village, the white man had two boats manned to go to her assistance, but as the boats approached, two cannons fired heavy balls at them from the deck of the ship; and although the white man (Hayes's trader) tied his handkerchief to an oar and held it upright, the people on the ship continued to fire on the boats with the big cannons, and with muskets, and then, when one man was hit by a bullet and died quickly, the white man cursed those on the ship for fools, and turned the boats shoreward again, saying that those on board could perish before he would try to help them again. By sunset three boats, filled with men, had left the ship and sailed to the south. In the morning the white man (whom I knew from their description of him to be a well-known and decent South Sea trader named Harry Gardiner) boarded the ship and began to remove all that was of value on shore. Her hold was filled with all sorts of goods in barrels and cases, and when "Puli Ese" came, three months later, he was well pleased, not only for the

seven hundred barrels of oil, but with the many things that had been gotten from the wrecked ship.

We promised our new friends to come up to their village—where they and about twenty of their fellow islanders lived with the remainder of Bully Hayes's Line Island contingent—on the following day, and sent them away with a few trifling presents. As they said they could walk back, and I wanted to have a look at the wreck, they cheerfully agreed to let their canoe remain with us.

About four in the afternoon, as the heat of the sun began to relax, I determined to set out in the canoe. Tematau and Tepi had gone across to the weather side of the island with my gun to shoot plover and frigate birds, of which latter, so the natives had told us, there were great numbers to be found on the high trees to windward. Lucia and Niābon were resting in the shade, but the latter, when she saw me pushing the canoe into the water, asked me to let her come also.

"Yes, of course; and you too, Lucia. Won't you come as well?" I said.

"No, Jim. I feel very lazy, and I'm always so afraid of canoes," she said with a smile, "and do be careful and not be capsized; look at all those horrid sharks swimming about—I can see nearly twenty of them from where I am sitting."

Both Niābon and I laughed at her fears—the sharks were not man-eaters, as we knew by their black-tipped fins, though the species were dangerous when bad weather made the fish on which they preyed scarce; then they became vicious and daring enough, and would

at times actually tear the oars out of the hands of a boat's crew. However, Lucia would not come, saying she would await the return of the men and pluck the plover which they were sure to bring back with them.

"Very well, Lucia," I said, "we'll leave you to yourself. I *must* have a look at the barque, and find out her name. Wrecks have always had an attraction for me; and, besides that, I want to get a sheet or two of copper to nail over our stem, which was badly hurt when we ran ashore in Apamama Lagoon."

In another minute or two Niābon and I started, she sitting for'ard and I aft. The wind had died away, and the surface of the lagoon was as smooth as glass, and, through the crystal-clear water, we could discern the glories of the gorgeously-hued coral forest below. Is there such another sight in all the world as is revealed when you look down upon the bottom of a South Sea atoll.

* * * * *

Ah, no, there cannot be! And here as I write, there is before me the cold German Ocean, heaving and tumbling; grey, grim, and sullen under a dulled and leaden sky, and snowflakes beat and beat incessantly upon the opened windows of my room. Out upon the moor there is a flock of snow-white seagulls, driven to land by the wild weather, and as I gaze at them, fluttering to and fro, their presence seems to creep into my heart, and their wild, piping notes to say, "You will go back, you will go back, and see some of us again; not here, under cold skies, but where the bright sun for ever shines upon a sea of deepest blue."

* * * * *

For half an hour or more we paddled in silence over the smooth waters of that sweet lagoon, the bow of the canoe kept steadily on towards the wrecked barque; and as I looked at the graceful figure of my companion, with her dark, glossy hair flowing over her back and swaying to and fro with every stroke, and saw the graceful poise of her head, and the backward sweep of her two little hands as she plunged her paddle into the water, and withdrew it swiftly and noiselessly, I felt that I could not, I must not delay in asking her to be my wife. Not that her physical beauty had so wrought upon my feelings—I was above that, I thank God, and a level brain—but because I felt that I loved her, ay, honestly *loved* her, and that she was a good and true woman, and our union would be a happy one.

It took us much longer than we anticipated in coming up to the stranded ship, or rather to the inside edge of the reef on which she lay, high and dry, half a mile further to seaward. Taking my hammer and a blunt chisel—to prize off a sheet of copper—we made the canoe fast to a coral boulder, and set off across the reef, which gave forth a strong but sickly odour caused by the heat of the sun acting on the many-coloured and many-shaped marine organisms and living coral.

Niäbon, whose feet were protected by strong *takka* (sandals woven of coco-nut fibre), stepped lightly and swiftly on before me; I with my heavy boots crushing into the brittle, delicate, and sponge-like coral, startling from their sunbaths hundreds of black and orange-banded sea-snakes—reptiles whose bite is as deadly as that of a rattlesnake, but which hastened out of our way



AT LAST WE REACHED THE SHIP AND STOOD UNDER HER BOWSPRIT.

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almost as soon as they heard our footsteps. Here and there we had to turn aside to avoid deep pools, some of which, though not more than ten fathoms in width, were as blue as the ocean beyond, their rocky walls starting sheer up from their bases to the crust of the reef.

At last we reached the ship, and stood under her bowsprit. She was standing almost upright, wedged in tightly between three huge boulders, one on her port, and two on her starboard side, and I saw that she had struck with great violence, for just abreast of her foremast there was a jagged hole through which we could see into her lower hold. The natives had told us that there had been an unusually high tide when she ran ashore, and had it not been for her bringing up against the boulders, she might have torn her way over the reef into the lagoon, as she was under a strong press of sail, and the sea was smooth, and the stars shining brightly. Most of her copper had been stripped off by Hayes, but later on I found all I wanted by crawling under the bilge, and prizing off a few undamaged sheets.

"Let us find out her name before we go on board," I said to my companion. "She's a foreigner, I'm sure."

Walking round to her stern we looked up and saw her name, *Agostino Rombo, Livorno*, painted in white letters.

"Ah, I thought she was a foreigner, Niābon. I fancy we shall find a strong smell of garlic as soon as we get on deck."

Turning up along the port side, we soon found an easy way of getting on board, for just abreast of the mainmast Hayes's Chinese carpenters had cut down

the main deck from the water-ways to the bilge, so as to give free access to the upper and lower holds.

We first examined the lower hold, which contained about two hundred tons of New Caledonian nickel ore, and which, valuable as it was, Hayes had not troubled about removing. In the 'tween deck there was nothing to show of what the main portion of her cargo had consisted—everything had been removed, and only great piles of dunnage remained, and I came to the conclusion that the *Agostino Rombo* of Leghorn had been bound from some Australian port to China with a general cargo, when her incapable skipper ran her ashore—to Bully Hayes's satisfaction and benefit.

Ascending from the dark and silent 'tween decks, where our footsteps and voices echoed and re-echoed as though we were walking and speaking in some mountain cavern, we ascended to the main deck into the fresh, sweet daylight, though the sun was now low down on the western sky, and the first thing that attracted our attention was a lengthy notice on the mainmast, carefully and neatly painted on a sheet of copper. And as I read it, I could but laugh at Captain Hayes's natural American business instincts, combined with his usual humorous mendacity—

“NOTICE TO WRECKING PARTIES.

“I, William Henry Hayes, master and owner of the brig *Leonora*, of Shanghai, hereby notify all and sundry that the barque *Agostino Rombo*, of Leghorn, as she now lies on this reef, has been purchased by me from Captain Pasquale Lucchesi, and any person attempting to remove any of her deck-houses, spars, anchors, or cables, or certain nickel ore in the lower hold, are liable to be indicted for piracy. But



all anchors, cables, and ground tackle generally may be removed on payment of 250 dols. to my native agent on this island."

From the main deck we ascended to the poop, and went below into the now darkening cabin, which we found was gutted of everything of value, except the captain's and officers' bedding, which had been tossed aside by Hayes and his crew, and which even the natives of Ujilon had regarded as too worthless to take away, though many a poor sailor man, shivering in northern seas, would have clutched at them as eagerly as a Jew pawnbroker would clutch at a necklace of pearls or a diamond-set tiara. The panelling of the main cabin was painted in white and gold, and presented a very handsome appearance, and on the door of every stateroom was an exceedingly well-painted picture of some saint renowned in history—evidently the owners of the *Agostino Rombo* were of pious minds. Underneath one of these pictures, that of St. Margaret of Hungary, was scribbled in pencil, "Maggie is my fancy. Frank Hussey, mate brig *Leonora*."

I scratched out the ribald words with my knife, and then we went up through the companion to the poop, and looked along the deserted deck, whose once white planking was now cracking and discolouring under the fierce rays of the torrid sun, to which it had been exposed for four months.

We sat down together on a seat, which was placed for'ard of the skylight, and gazed at the lofty masts and spars, which, denuded of all their running gear, stood out stark, grim, and mournful against the rays of a

declining sun. On the fore-topgallant yard a frigate bird and his mate stood, oblivious of our presence, and looking shoreward at the long, long line of verdure clothing the islets four miles away.

"Simi," said Niābon, clasping her little brown hands together at the back of her head, and leaning against the skylight, "we must return to the canoe ere the tide riseth, for, see, the sun is low down, and Lucia will think that some harm hath befallen us if we delay."

She spoke in Samoan, the language she generally used when we were alone, for she could express herself better in it even than in English, so she said, though both Lucia and myself had often told her, not bantering, that her English was sweet to hear.

"Heed not the sinking sun, Niābon," I replied, in the same language, "the tide will not yet cover the reef for an hour or more, and the night will be bright and clear. . . . Niābon, turn thy face to me."

I took her hand and drew her closer to me.

"Niābon, I love thee. I have loved thee since the time when thou first saidst to me, 'Shall I give thee sleep?' And for ever since hast thou been in my mind. See, I have loved no other woman as I love thee, and it is my heart's desire to make thee my wife."

She drew herself away from me with blazing eyes.

"Thy wife, thy wife! Simi, what madness is this? Hast thou no eyes to see? Is thy mind so dull that thou dost not know that Lucia hath loved thee, and that even at this moment her heart acheth for thy return. Dost thou not *know*?"

"I care not for her but as a friend," I said hotly;

“ 'tis thee alone I desire. Thou art always in my mind, and I will be good and true to thee, Niābon; for I love thee well. Be my wife. Together thee and I——”

The angry light in her eyes died out, and she placed her cheek to mine.

“ Simi, I care more for thee than for any one in the world, save Lucia, and Lucia hath all my heart and all my love. And she so loves thee, Simi—she so loves thee that it is her heart's desire to be thy wife. . . . Come, dear friend, let us return and forget all but that Lucia awaits.”

She passed her hand softly over my face, pressed her lips to my forehead, and then I followed her down from the silent deck on to the reef, and thence onwards to the canoe.

CHAPTER XV

ALL that she said to me that night as we returned over the stilly waters of the lagoon to our companions, I cannot now remember; I only know that as she sat facing me, and I paddled slowly and dreamily along, I promised her, dully and mechanically, to tell Lucia that night that I loved her.

“And she and thee will be happy, very happy, Simi. Her heart went out to thee from the very first. And children will come to thee, and I shall see them grow—the boys strong and brave as thou art, and the girls fair and sweet as Lucia—and yet shalt thou have thy heart’s desire, and be spoken of as a man who did a great deed . . . a great voyage . . . and all that hath been done by the three men of whom thou hast so often thought will be but as little compared with this voyage of thine. And she so loves thee, Simi; ah, she so loves thee.”

The soft murmur of her voice enthralled, took such possession of me mentally and physically, that I know not what I answered except that I said again and again, “Ay, I love her, I love her, and I shall tell her of my love, and that she, and she alone, is my heart’s desire.”

How long we were in getting back to the island I



cannot tell, but I do remember that it was quite dark, and both Niābon and myself were paddling vigorously when we heard Tepi's loud hail of welcome, and a canoe shot up on the beach, and Lucia came towards me with outstretched hands.

"Jim, oh Jim! I thought you were never coming back," she said.

I folded her in my arms and kissed her. "Lucia, dear, dear Lucia! Will you be my wife? For I love you," and then, scarcely knowing what I was doing, I strained her almost savagely to my bosom, and kissed her upturned face again and again.

"Jim, dear, dear Jim," and her soft arms were around my neck, "and I love you too! I have loved you almost from the day you first came to Taritai, and Niābon has told me that one day you would tell me that you loved me . . . that some day you would speak . . . Jim dearest, bend down; you are so tall, and I am so little; ah, Jim, I am so little, but my heart, dear, is so big with love for you, that I feel that I could take *you* in my arms, and kiss you as you now kiss me. Jim, dear, I never, never knew what love meant till now."

A bright burst of flame illumined the beach, and Niābon with a torch in her hand was standing at the water's edge.

"The night is fair and good, and the wind is from the east. Let us away, dear friends."

Her voice seemed to reach me as if from far, far away, though her dark face with the deep luminous eyes were so near, and, as she spoke, the boat, with Tepi and

Tematau standing erect and waiting, grounded gently on the strand.

“Yes, yes, we shall sail to-night,” I cried exultantly, as I again pressed Lucia to my heart, and showered passionate kisses upon her lips, “we shall sail, Lucia my dearest; on, and on, and on, to the north-west, my beloved, till we come to our journey’s end, and you and I shall never part again, no never, never, my dearest.”

“Ay, never, never shall ye two part again,” cried Niābon, casting down her torch; “man with the strong and daring hand, and woman with the fond and tender heart. Thy lives are forever linked together. Quick, give me thy hand, Lucia, my dove, my own, my own!”

She sprang towards us, and took Lucia’s hand in hers, and almost tore off her wedding ring, and then flung it far out into the lagoon.

“Sink, sink, thou ring of misery—thou golden circle which should have meant love and trust and happiness, but brought naught but hate and treachery and poison to her who wore it. Sink, accursed thing.”

“Oh, Jim, Jim!” and Lucia turned her streaming eyes to mine, “it was my wedding ring, and when *he* gave it to me, I think he loved me, wicked and cruel as he was afterwards. Oh, Niābon, Niābon!”

In a moment Niābon’s arms were around her.

“My sweet, my sweet! thou art to me more than life,” she whispered, “I love thee so, Lucia. I love thee so that I would die for thee! Heed not the ring, for now thou hast beside thee a good man—true, brave, and strong—one whose love will forever shield thee. Come, my dearest, come with me to the boat.”

They went down the beach together, with arms around each other's waists, and their footsteps guided by the still-burning torch lying on the sand. I followed, and in another minute I had the tiller in my hand, and told Tepi to push off, as Tematau ran up the jib.

"How now for the passage?" I cried, as I slipped my arm around Lucia's waist, and her lips met mine, "how now for the passage, Tepi? Canst see? Canst see, Tematau?"

Niäbon placed her hand on mine.

"Have no fear, Simi. The wind is fair and the passage through the reef is wide, and the ship on the right hand is a good guide. See, her masts stand out clear against the sky. And give me the tiller, for thou and Lucia are tired. So sleep—sleep till the dawn, and Tematau and Tepi and I shall keep watch through the night. How shall I steer?"

"North-west, north-west," I muttered, as Lucia laid her cheek to mine, "north-west, but call me if the wind hauls to the northward."

She bent over Lucia and touched her face softly.

"Sleep, dear one, sleep till dawn," she said in a whisper, and then with a smile she turned to me.

"Simi, thou too art tired, and must sleep even as Lucia sleepeth now. See, her eyes are closed. How sweet and fair she is as she sleepeth! Ah, how sweet! So, let me touch thy face." She pressed her soft hand on my brow, and then, with Lucia's head pillowed on my breast, I slept.



CHAPTER XVI

FOR seventeen days we made good progress to the north-west, though we met with such very heavy weather when between Minto Breakers Reef, and the island of Oraluk, that I had to run back to the latter place for shelter, and all but missed it. Although so small, it is very fertile, and the natives were very hospitable, Niābon and Lucia being given a room in the chief's house, and I and my two men were given a house to ourselves, where we were very comfortable during our stay of four days, though unable to get about on account of the pouring rain, which hardly ceased for an hour. The chief's house was quite near to that in which we were quartered, so I spent a good deal of my time there, for although I cannot say that I was really in love with my future wife, her gentle endearments, and the happiness that shone in her dark eyes when I was with her gave me a certain restfulness, and I was well content.

We had long since decided as to our future. After our marriage she was to stay with her sister, or with my friends, the Otano's, on Guam, whilst I made my way to my friend at Amboyna, and got him to provide me with such an amount of trade goods that when I

returned to Guam I should be in a position to at once begin trading operations either in the Marianas, with Guam for my headquarters, or else choose some suitable place in the Caroline Archipelago. The boat, I had no doubt, I could sell at San Luis d'Apra, or San Ignacio, and this I intended to do if a fair price was offered me. Then I would take passage in one of the Spanish trading schooners to Manila, and from there I could easily get to Amboyna; and all going well, it was more than likely that my friend would lend or sell me on easy terms, one of his own small trading vessels, for he had half a dozen or more employed throughout the Moluccas, and on the coast of the Phillipine Islands.

On the second day after our arrival on Oraluk, the rain cleared off for an hour, and I went over to the chief's house, and found Lucia conversing in Spanish with some native women who could speak it brokenly, for years before there had been a Jesuit mission on the island, but it had been abandoned, and the two priests, after a stay of five years, had gone back to Manila. Niäbon was not in the house—she had gone into the forest with some of the young girls, Lucia said, as she bade me come in and sit down.

“She is a strange girl, Lucia. She seems to love to be in the forest, or walking on the cliffs or mountain tops. I wish I knew the true story of her life.”

Lucia shook her head. “She will not tell it, Jim, and I am sure she does not like to be questioned even by me. But yet she *has* told me a little, and there can be no harm in my telling you—I am sure she would not mind.”

“No, why should she mind?”

“She told me that her very first memories of her childhood go back to when she was a child of six at Manhiki. She lived alone with her mother in a little hut quite apart from the other people. Even then she says she knew that her mother was a “witch-woman” and was greatly feared by the natives, who yet came to her for charms and medicines. Who her mother was she does not know—but she is quite certain that she was a full-blooded Polynesian, though not a native of Manhiki. Her father she had never seen, nor had her mother ever made even the faintest allusion to him, and Niābon herself had never dared question her on the subject. She told me, however, that she imagined he was a white man.”

“I am almost sure he was,” I said; “she certainly is not a full-blooded native.”

“I am sure of it too. But she does not like to be thought anything but a pure native. Why, I cannot tell, and have never asked her her reasons.”

“Is her mother still living?”

“I do not know and do not like to ask her. She told me that she, her mother, and Tematau had left Manhiki and wandered through the islands of the South Pacific for many years. Tematau she says is a blood relation. He only took service as head boatman with Krause so as to be near her, for from the very first day she saw me, she determined to live at Taritai. And we have always been the closest friends.”

“I know she loves you very dearly,” I said, as I rose to return to my house, for just then we saw Niābon

herself coming through the village accompanied by a number of young women.

We left Oraluk with a slashing breeze, which we held for eight days, the boat doing splendid work, and on the morning of the tenth day we sighted Guam, forty miles away, and looming blue against the sky line.

"Three thousand miles," I cried exultingly, "three thousand miles, Lucia—in fact, nearer three thousand two hundred."

Her dark eyes filled with tears as she pressed my hand and looked at the home of her childhood, and even Niābon showed some trace of excitement as she bent her glance upon the great mound of land.

I opened our one remaining bottle of wine which had been reserved for this auspicious day, and we shared it between us, whilst Tepi and Tematau were each given a stiff glass of grog.

"Blow, good breeze, blow," I cried, "blow steady and strong."

"Blow, good wind, blow steady and true," echoed my two men, as I eased off the main sheet, and the boat went faster through the water, and made a seething wake.

As we were so well to windward of the island, I determined to head for Cape Ritidian, its north-west point, as from there I could easily pick up Port Tarofof, where, so Lucia assured me, we should find a pilot to take us down the coast to Port San Luis. Not having a chart of the island made it necessary for me to be cautious, but Lucia was quite sure that from Cape Ritidian we should have no trouble in running down the

coast to Tarafoto—a port with which she was quite familiar, for she had been there on many occasions with her father. The anchorage was good, and there was a small town at the head of the harbour, where supplies could be obtained.

“That will do us nicely, then,” I said; “we may as well spell there for a few days and get well rested. Oh, won’t it be glorious to feel solid earth under foot once more after the last ten weary days!” “Oh Jim, the very thought of stepping on shore again makes my veins thrill. Oh, the great lovely green mountain forest, and the calls of the birds and the sweet sound of falling water—it is heaven to think of being there, in such a beautiful country after so many, many days upon the sea! Ah, you will love Guam, Jim! You cannot help it—it is the fairest, sweetest land in all the world, I think.”

Her enthusiasm infected me to some degree, and bending forward to her, I whispered,—

“Is there a church at Tarafoto, Lucia?”

A vivid blush dyed her sweet face from neck to brow.

“Yes,” she answered, so softly that I could scarce hear her, “there has always been a church there for a hundred years. It was once plundered and burned by pirates, so one of the priests told me when I was a child.”

The breeze held good with us, and at four in the afternoon we ran in under Cape Ritidian and brought to half a cable away from the shore, which presented an aspect of the loveliest verdured hills and valleys imagin-



able, fringed with a curving snow-white beach, along which were scattered a few native houses, surrounded by plantations of bananas and papaw trees.

Presently a boat came off manned by natives dressed in very bright colours. They all spoke Spanish and at once offered to pilot us down to Tarafoto Harbour, which, they said, we could enter at any time, day or night; we accepted their services, and they came aboard, veered their boat astern, and by nightfall we came to an anchor in a small, but safe and exceedingly beautiful harbour.

Here more of the country people came on board, late as it was, and pressed us to sleep on shore, telling us that there were some very comfortable houses in the village, which was situated two miles up the Tarafoto river. Then one of the visitors recognised Lucia, and now invitations poured in upon us from all sides, and finally Lucia and Niābon, accompanied by Tematau, went ashore with them, leaving Tepi and myself on board.

“Good-night, Jim dear,” said Lucia, as she was about to get into the shore boat, “you will come on shore early, won’t you? I don’t like your staying behind, but you and Tepi will perhaps get a good night’s rest now that three of us will be out of the way. I should never go to sleep if I stayed on board to-night. I am so excited.”

I stooped and kissed her little upturned face, and in another moment she was in the boat, which at once pushed off into the darkness and made for shore.

“Good-night, again,” both she and Niābon cried, and Tematau also called out *Tiakapo!*

“Good-night, good-night,” I shouted, swaying our boat lantern in farewell. “*Tiakapo*, Tematau. May you all sleep well.”

They made some merry laughing response, in which they were joined by their hosts, and then Tepi and I were alone.

We put on the cabin hatches, spread out our sleeping mats and made ourselves comfortable for the night, and after half an hour's smoke, we fell asleep too tired to talk.

* * * * *

A little after midnight the cool breeze suddenly died away, and both Tepi and myself awoke almost at the same moment.

“The air hath grown hot, and is hard to breathe, master,” said the big man “I fear a storm is near.”

It had indeed become very hot and stifling, but on looking at the barometer, I saw there was no change, and so felt no concern, for we were in an excellent position, no matter how hard, and from where it might blow. In half an hour or so, a few heavy splashes of rain fell, then a sudden shower, which necessitated us lifting off the hatch and going into the cabin, and it was then that Tepi complained to me of a severe headache, from which I was also beginning to suffer.

I had just struck a match to take another look at the glass, when suddenly the boat began to tremble violently, and then gave such a sudden jerk at her cable that I fell forward on my face.

“*Mafuie! Mafuie!*” (“Earthquake! earthquake!”) cried Tepi in terror-stricken tones, as he clutched the



AND LIFTING US UP ON THE SUMMIT OF ITS AWFUL CREST, HURLED
US SHOREWARD TO DESTRUCTION. [To face p. 152]





coamings and looked seaward. "Oh, Simi, look, look! The sea, the sea! We perish!"

May God spare me from ever seeing such another sight! A black towering wall of water was rushing towards the boat, and ere I could frame my lips to utter an appeal for mercy to the Almighty it was upon us, and lifting us up on the summit of its awful crest, hurled us shoreward to destruction. Then I remembered no more.

* * * * *

Two weeks later I awoke to life and misery in a wide, low-ceiled room. Tepi, with his arm in a sling, was bending over me, and sitting beside my bed were two padres.

"Where am I, good fathers?" I asked.

"In San Ignacio, my son," replied the elder of the two. "God has spared you and this Indian sailor of yours to render thanks to Him and the Holy Virgin for His mercy."

"And where are my friends—the two girls and Tematau? Tell me, Tepi! Tell me," I said, with a dull terror at my heart. "Why do you shake and hide your face?" Then I turned to the priests.

"For God's sake, tell me, gentlemen," and I clutched the hand of the one nearest to me.

"In Paradise, my son. They and three hundred other poor souls rendered up their lives to God thirteen days ago. Scarcely a score of people in Tarafoto escaped."

The shock was too much for me, and I fell back again.

* * * * *


154 STRANGE ADVENTURE OF JAMES SHERVINTON

As soon as I was strong enough for the journey I visited the scene, and was shown, on the spot where once the church had stood, a bare, grim mound. Underneath it lay all that was mortal of Lucia, Niabon, Tematau, and three hundred others, who had in one swift moment been sent to eternity that dreadful night. Some of the few survivors, who, under the direction of a priest, and the Governor of San Ignacio, were erecting a tall wooden cross at the foot of the great grave, led me to the site of the house in which my dear companions had met their deaths. Nine other people were in the house when it fell and buried the sleepers, and the agony must have been short for them all.

The tidal wave which accompanied the earthquake had hurled the boat and Tepi and myself for many hundreds of yards inland. I was picked up in the boat herself, stunned and severely injured. Tepi was carried into a rice field, and although his arm was broken, he at once set out in search of me, and the faithful fellow had come with me when I was carried in a bullock cart to San Ignacio, where the doctor and priests had brought me round after two weeks' dangerous illness.

Before leaving Guam I spent two months with my friend José Otano, who tried hard to make me stay with him. At his house poor Lucia's heart-broken sister came to see me very often, and I bade her farewell with genuine sorrow.

Then one day Tepi and I turned our faces once more to the islands of the south—and so the story of my strange adventure is told.



“PIG-HEADED” SAILOR MEN

CROSSING from Holyhead to Ireland one night the captain of the steamer and myself, during an hour's talk on the bridge, found that we each had sailed in a certain Australian coasting steamer more than twenty years before—he as chief officer and I as passenger; and her shipwreck one Christmas Eve (long after), which was attended by an appalling loss of life, led us to talk of “pig-headed” skippers generally. His experiences were large, and some of his stories were terrible even to hear, others were grotesquely humorous, and the memory of that particularly pleasant passage across a sea as smooth as a mill pond, has impelled me to retell some of the incidents I related to him of my own adventures with obstinate, self-willed, or incapable captains.

My first experience was with a gentleman of the “incapable” variety, and befell me when I was quite a lad. I had taken my passage in a very smart little Sydney (N.S.W.) barque bound for Samoa *viâ* the Friendly Islands. She was commanded by a Captain Rosser, who had sailed her for nearly twenty years in the South Sea trade, and who was justly regarded as the

doyen of island skippers. He was a "Bluenose," stood six feet two in his stockinged feet, and was a man of the most determined courage, unflinching resolution, and was widely known and respected by the white traders and the natives all over the South Pacific.

In those days there was quite a fleet of vessels engaged in the South Sea trade, and most of them were owned in, and sailed from Sydney, and I could have secured a passage in any one of three other vessels, but preferred the *Rimitara* (so I will call her), merely because the agent had told me that no other passengers were going by her. Captain Rosser himself frankly told me that he did not like passengers, but when he learned that I had been to sea before, and intended settling in Samoa as a trader, his grim visage relaxed, and he growled something about my finding the accommodation ample enough, as I was to be the only passenger.

The *Rimitara* was lying off Garden Island, and as she was to sail at eleven in the morning I went on board at ten with the captain himself. Just ahead of the barque was a very handsome brigantine, also bound for the Friendly Islands. She had been launched only a few weeks previously, and had been built for His Majesty King George of Tonga, at a cost of £4,000, as a combined cargo and despatch vessel. As Rosser and I stepped on the barque's poop the captain of the brigantine—whose decks were crowded with visitors—hailed the former and challenged him to a race.

"Oh, race with yourself, sir," was Rosser's abrupt reply, as he bade his chief mate heave up, and then seeing that a number of ladies were standing beside the captain of

the brigantine, he raised his hat, and added more good-humouredly that although the *Rimitara* was not a yacht like the *Tuitoga*, he would bet the captain of the latter ten pounds that the barque would be at anchor in Nukualofa Harbour forty-eight hours before him.

"Make it fifty," cried the master of the new ship, amid the cheers of his guests.

Rosser shook his head, and replied with apparent unconcern (though he was really angry) that ten pounds was enough for any one to lose. "But," he added, "don't think I'm going to race you. I'm just going to dodder along as usual." (He kept his word most thoroughly.)

We got underway first, and were just passing out between Sydney Heads under easy sail, when the brigantine overtook us, and passed us like a race-horse galloping past a trotting donkey. She presented a beautiful sight as she swept by with yards braced up sharp to a good south-east breeze, and every stitch of her brand-new canvas drawing. One of the officers had the bad manners to take up a coil of small line, and make a pretence of heaving it to us for a tow rope. Rosser looked on with an unmoved face, though our own mate made some strong remarks.

"Guess it's that champagne he's drunk," was all that Rosser said as he turned away, and I have no doubt he was right, for we afterwards learned that nearly every one aft on board the brigantine was half-drunk when she lifted anchor, the visitors having brought on board half a dozen cases of champagne—as a matter of fact we had seen the steward opening bottles on the poop. In an hour the *Tuitoga* was a long way ahead.

Rosser said to us at dinner—

"That brigantine will come to grief. She's overmasted, and the fellow who has her ought not to be trusted with her. He's going to make a mess of things."

Then in his slow, drawling manner, he told us that the command of the *Tuitoga* had been given to an ex-lieutenant of the navy, whose knowledge of sailing vessels was confined to his youthful experiences on one of the service training brigs; but King George of Tonga was anxious to secure an English naval officer to command the new ship, and out of some hundreds of eager applicants, Lieutenant Raye had been selected.

By sundown the brigantine was hull down ahead of us, though the barque was a very smart vessel, and we were then making eleven knots. At midnight, I heard the mate give orders to take in royals and topgallant sails, and going on deck, found the wind had almost died away.

Rosser was on deck, and told me that we were "going to get it hot from the N.E. before long;" and by four in the morning we were under topsails and lower courses only, the ship flying before a most unpleasant sea. I turned in again, and slept till daylight, when the second mate gave me a call.

"Come on deck and see something pretty."

The "something pretty" was the brigantine, which was in sight about a mile away on our lee bow. She was in a terrible mess. Her fore and main royal masts and topgallant masts and jibboom had apparently all been carried away together, and she was almost lying on

her beam ends. We ran down to her, and saw that her crew were busy in cutting away the spars and sails alongside. All her boats were gone, and her for'ard deck house had started, and was working to and fro with every sea.

In less than half an hour the mate and six hands from the barque were on board, assisting the crew, cutting away the wire rigging and trimming the cargo, the shifting of which had nearly sent her to the bottom. I went with the boat to lend a hand, and the second mate of the brigantine told me that the young captain had refused to listen to the mate's suggestion to shorten sail, when the officer told him that the wind would certainly come away suddenly from the N.E. The consequence was that a furious squall took her aback, and had not the jibboom—and then the upper spars—carried away under the terrific strain, she would have gone to the bottom. The worst part of the business was that two poor seamen had been lost overboard.

"He's a pretty kind of man for a skipper if you like," said the second officer bitterly. "He ought to be hanged for pretending he's a sailorman. It's sheer murder to put such a jackass in command of a deep-water sailing ship."

After rendering all possible assistance to the brigantine, we left her about mid-day; and had been lying at anchor for two weeks in Nukualofa Harbour before she put in an appearance outside the reef. A native pilot went out in a canoe, but the captain haughtily declined his services, and would not even let him come on board—he wanted to show people that although

he had never seen Nakualofa Harbour before, he could bring his ship in without a pilot. In less than half an hour, a swirling eddy caught the vessel, and carried her broadside on to the reef, where she would have been battered to pieces, had not our two boats gone to her assistance, and with great difficulty got her off again. Captain Raye several times countermanded orders given by his chief officer—an experienced seaman—and bullied and "jawed" his crew in the most pompous and irritating manner, and finally when we succeeded in getting the vessel off the reef with the loss of her false keel and rudder, and were towing her into smooth water inside the reef, he came for'ard, and abruptly desired our chief mate to cease towing, as he meant to anchor.

"Anchor, and be hanged to you," replied our officer with angry contempt; "the kind of ship you ought to command is one that is towed by a horse along a path in the old country."

We cast off and left him to his own conceit and devices. He let go in less than five fathoms, paid out too much cable, and went stern first on to a coral patch, where he stuck for a couple of days, much to our delight.

Within six months this gentleman succeeded in getting the brigantine ashore on four occasions, and she had to return to Sydney to be repaired at a cost of £1,700.

* * * * *

My next two experiences were with the pig-headed type. I had made an agreement with the master of a Fiji-owned vessel—also a brigantine—to convey myself

and my stock of trade goods from an island in the Tokelau or Union Group (South Pacific) to Yap, in the Caroline Islands in the North-west, where I intended starting a trading business. This captain was as good a seaman as ever trod a deck, and had had a rather long experience of the island trade, but a mule could not surpass him in obstinacy, as I was soon to learn, to my sorrow.

A week after leaving the Tokelaus, we dropped anchor on the edge of the reef of one of the Gilbert Group, to land supplies for a trader living there. The coast was very exposed to all but an easterly wind, and neither the mate nor myself liked the idea of anchoring at all. The skipper, however, brought his vessel close in to the roaring breakers on the reef, let go his anchor in six fathoms, and then neatly backed astern into blue water sixty fathoms deep. Here we lay apparently safe enough, for the time, the wind being easterly and steady.

By sunset we had finished landing stores and shipping cargo, and when the captain came off in the last boat, we naturally expected him to heave up and get out of such a dangerous place, but to our surprise he remarked carelessly that as the men were very tired, he would hold on until daylight.

"I wouldn't risk it if I were you," said the trader, who had come aboard in his own boat to "square up." "You can't depend on this easterly breeze holding all night, and it may come on squally from the west or south-west in a few hours, and take you unawares."

"Bosh!" was the reply. "Hoist the boats up, Mr. Laird, and tell the men to get supper."

"Very well, sir," replied the mate, none too cheerfully.

Just as the trader was going ashore, he said to me aside, quietly, "This little monkey-faced skipper is a blazing idiot" (our captain was a very, very little man). "I told him again just now, that if the wind comes away from west or south-west, or even if it falls calm, he'll find he's caught, to a dead certainty. But he as good as told me to mind my own business."

Naturally enough I was anxious. I had on board trade goods which had cost £1,100, and of course had not one penny of insurance on them. The brigantine, however, was well insured, though I do not impute this fact as being the cause of the captain's neglect of a sensible warning.

After supper, the captain turned in, while the mate and I, both feeling very uneasy, paced the deck till about nine o'clock, at which hour the wind had become perceptibly lighter, and the captain was called. He came on deck, trotted up and down in his pyjamas for a few minutes, sat on the rail, like a monkey on a fence, and then asked the mate snappishly what he was "scared about?"

The mate made no reply, and the captain was just going below again, when two fishing canoes, with four natives in each, came quite near us, both heading for the shore; and the skipper asked me to hail them and see if they had any fish to sell. I did so.

"No," was the reply; "we are going back again, because much rain and wind is coming from the westward, and we want to get over the reef before the surf becomes



too great." Then one of them stood up and added—

"Why does not the ship go away quickly. This is a very bad place here when the wind and the sea come from the west. Your ship will be broken to pieces."

"What do they say?" inquired the little man.

I translated what they had said.

"Bosh, I say again," was the reply, "the glass has been as steady as a rock for the past three days," and then, to my intense anger, he added an insinuation that my fears had led me to deliberately misinterpret what the natives had said. The retort I made was of so practical a nature that the mate had to assist the skipper to his feet.

A quarter of an hour later, as the mate and I still walked the deck, discussing the captain's shortcomings, the wind died away suddenly, and then several of our native crew came aft, and said that a squall was coming up from the westward, and the mate, though neither he nor myself could then see any sign of it, went below and again called the captain.

He came on deck, with one hand covering his injured left optic, told me he would settle with me in the morning, and then took a long look astern, and there, certainly enough, was a long streak of black rising over the horizon. The mate stood by waiting his orders.

"It's not coming near us," said the little man more snappishly than ever, as he marched up and down the poop.

"I say it is," said Laird bluntly, "and I consider

this ship will be ashore, if we don't slip and tow out a bit before it is too late."

The mate's manner had some effect on the obstinate little animal—"Oh, well, if there's such a lot of old women on board, I'll give in. Call the hands, and we'll heave up."

"Heave up!" echoed the mate in angry astonishment, "what's the use of trying to heave up now! That squall will be on us in ten minutes, and if we had an hour to spare, it would be none too long. Why, man, it's a dead calm, and the swell will send us into the surf on the reef quick enough without our dragging the ship into it. Reckon the best and only thing we can do, is down boats, and then slip cable right-away. We might get a show then to lay along the reef, and get clear."

"I'm not going to lose a new cable and anchor to please any one," was the stupid reply. (He could very easily have recovered both anchor and cable with the assistance of the natives on the following day, or indeed months after.)

Then he sang out to the men to man the windlass.

The hands, realising the danger, turned to with a will, but within five minutes the first breath of the squall caught us, and sent us ahead, as was evident by the way the slackened cable came in through the hawsepipe.

We had out fifty-five fathoms of chain, and before twenty-five were in, the squall was upon us properly; the brigantine went gracefully ahead, overran her anchor, plunged into the roaring breakers on the reef, and struck bows on.

In another moment or two a heavy sea caught her on

the starboard quarter, canted her round, and dashed her broadside on to the reef with terrific violence. Then, fortunately for our lives, two or three further rollers sent her crashing along till she brought up against two or three coral boulders, whose tops were revealed every now and then by the backwash. In less than twenty minutes she was hopelessly bilged, and her decks swept by every sea.

We carried three boats, and our native sailors showed their pluck and skill by actually getting all three safely into the water, two on the lee side, and one on the other.

The captain, now conscious of his folly, became very modest, and gave his orders quietly. The crew, however, took no notice of him and looked to the mate. He (the captain) ordered me into the first boat, in which were the ship's papers, charts, chronometer, &c. I refused, and said I preferred getting on shore in my own way.

I had seen that two native boys (passengers) had run out on to the bowsprit, and, watching their chance, had dropped over into a curling roller, and were carried safely ashore.

I had with me on board about nine hundred silver Mexican and Chili dollars—some in a cash box, the rest in a bag. Calling my native servant, Lévi, I asked him if he thought all the boats would get ashore safely. He shook his head, said that it was doubtful, and that it would be better for me to throw the bag and the cash box over the lee side, where they were pretty sure to be recovered in the morning at low tide.

"All the boats will capsize, or get stove in, going

over the reef, or else will be smashed to bits on the shore, he said, "and the natives will steal everything they can lay their hands on, especially if the white men are drowned. So it is better to throw the money overboard."

I took his advice, and going on deck, we dropped both box and bag overboard, just where Lévi pointed out a big boulder, against which the brigantine was crushing and pounding her quarter.

Again refusing to enter any of the boats, I watched my chance, and ran for'ard, followed by Lévi, and as soon as a big roller came along, we dropped, and were carried ashore beautifully. Some hundreds of natives and the white trader were on the look out, and ran in and caught us before the backwash carried us out again.

The mate's boat had already reached the shore without accident, owing to the splendid manner in which he and his native crew had handled her; but both the captain and second mate came to grief, their boats broaching to and capsizing just as they were within a few fathoms of the shore.

However, no lives were lost, and although next morning the brigantine's decks had worked out of her and came ashore, the hull held together for some weeks, and we saved a lot of stores. My money I recovered two or three days later, though it had been carried more than a hundred yards away from the spot where it had been dropped overboard. The tin cashbox (which I had tied up in an oilskin coat, parcelled round with spun yarn, and weighted inside with several hundred



Snider cartridges) was found buried in sand and broken coral, in a small pool on the reef; it presented a most curious appearance, being almost round in shape. The canvas bag was found near by, under a ledge of the reef, together with the binnacle bell—which was doubled flat—and a dinner plate! The bag (of No 2 canvas) had been hastily rolled up by Lévi in the cabin table-cloth, weighted with all the loose Snider cartridges we could find in the darkened trade room, and tied up at each end like a “roly-poly.” This proved its salvation, for when we dug it out (under three fathoms of water) the outer covering came away in fine shreds, and some of the big Mexican sun dollars had cut through the canvas.

So ended my second experience, and the only satisfactory thing about it to me, after losing over a thousand pounds worth of goods through the captain’s obstinacy, was that when he was fussing about after the wreck trying to get one of the anchors ashore, he managed to lose his right forefinger. I regret to say that whilst I dressed the stump and bound up his hand for him, I could not help telling him that I was sorry it was not his head that had been knocked off—previous to our going ashore. ’Twas very unchristianlike, but I was very sore with the man for his pig-headedness, and then he so bewailed the loss of his finger; never thinking of the fact that the boatswain had all but lost an eye, but had never even murmured at his hard luck.

* * * * *

My third experience of a “pig-headed” master mariner, followed very quickly—so quickly, that I began

to think some evil star attended my fortunes, or rather misfortunes.

After living on the island for three months, after the loss of the brigantine, two vessels arrived on the same day—one, a schooner belonging to San Francisco, and bound to that port ; the other, the *George Noble*, a fine handsome barquentine, bound to Sydney. Now, it would have suited me very well to go to California in the schooner, but finding that the skipper of the wrecked brigantine had arranged for passages for himself, officers and crew in her, I decided to go to Sydney in the *George Noble*, purely because the little man with the missing finger had become so objectionable to me—brooding over my losses, and wondering how I could pay my debts—that I felt I could not possibly remain at close quarters with the man in a small schooner without taking a thousand pounds worth of damage out of him during the voyage, which " taking out " process might land me in a gaol with two years imprisonment to serve. So I bade goodbye to good mate Laird, and the boatswain with the injured eye, and the native crew who had acted so gallantly ; and then with Lévi standing by my side, holding my ponderous bag of my beloved Mexican dollars in one hand, and a few articles of clothing in the other, I told Captain —— that I considered him to be an anthropoid ape, an old washerwoman, and a person who should be generally despised and rejected by all people, even those of the dullest intellects, such as those of the members of the firm who employed him. And then recalling to my memory the sarcastic remark of the mate of the *Rimitara*, to the



pompous captain of the *Tuitoga* about the command of a canal boat, I wound up by adding that he had missed his vocation in life, and instead of being skipper of a smart brigantine, he was intended by Providence to be captain of a mud-dredge, for which position, however, he had probably barely sufficient intelligence.

Feeling very despondent—for I had but nine hundred Mexican and Chilian dollars to meet a debt of eleven hundred pounds, and had out of this to keep myself and servant for perhaps six months until I got another start as a trader, I went on board the *George Noble* and bargained with her captain for a passage to Sydney, at which port I knew I could at once meet with an engagement.

The captain of the *George Noble* was a very decent and good-natured German, named Evers. He agreed to take me and my henchman to Sydney for 125 dollars—I to live aft, the boy to go for'ard with the sailors, and lend a hand in working the ship, if called upon in an emergency. The vessel, I found, was owned by a firm of Chinese merchants in Sydney, and carried a Chinese supercargo, but he was the only Celestial on board, the firm only employing him on account of their having so many Chinese traders throughout the equatorial islands of the Pacific.

I had not been long on board the *George Noble* when I discovered that Evers, who was a fine sailorman and a good navigator as well, was one of the “ pig-headed ” kind. His mate, second mate, and carpenter, were Britishers, as were nearly all the crew, but they and the skipper could not agree. There was no open rupture

—but Evers had the idea that both his officers and men disliked him because he was a "Dutchman." Perhaps this was so, but if it was, the officers and men never showed their dislike at being commanded by a foreigner—they knew he was a good seaman, and gave him unvarying respect and obedience. Nevertheless, Captain Evers never spoke a friendly word to any one of his officers, and when he had to speak to them, he did so in such a manner of strained politeness and severity, that it was really unpleasant to hear him.

On our way to Sydney we called at various islands of the Gilbert Group, and finally went into Apaian Lagoon, where the barquentine had to load one hundred tons of copra (dried coco-nut). During the time I had been on board, Evers and myself had become very intimate, and, I am glad to say, through me, he and his officers became quite friendly with each other. And we all spent many happy evenings together. But I could see that Evers was extremely jealous of his second mate's reputation as a South Sea pilot, and he would very often purposely question him as to the entrance of such and such a passage of such and such an island, and then deliberately contradict his officer's plain and truthful statements, and tell him he was wrong. Foster, a good-humoured old fellow, would merely laugh and change the subject, though he well knew that Captain Evers had had very little experience of the navigation of the South Seas, and relied upon his charts more than upon his local knowledge—he would never take a suggestion from his officers, both of whom were old "island" men—especially the second mate.



We loaded the hundred tons of copra, and were ready for sea by nine o'clock one morning, when a number of large sailing canoes came off, crowded with natives from a distant part of the island, all anxious to buy firearms and ammunition in view of a great expedition against the adjacent island of Tarawa. They all possessed either plenty of money or copra, and Evers did a remarkably good, though illegal business, and sold them over a hundred rifles. By the time they had finished, however, it was past one o'clock, and I concluded that we could not leave the lagoon till the following morning. To my surprise, and the second mate's open-mouthed astonishment, the skipper, who was highly elated with his morning's trading, told the mate to clear the decks, and get ready to heave up.

"Why, he's mad!" said the second officer to me.

Now I must explain: Apaian Lagoon is a vast atoll completely enclosed on the eastern and southern sides by a low, narrow strip of land, densely covered with coco-palms, and on the northern and western by a continuous chain of tiny islets connected by the reef. On the western side there are two narrow ship passages, both exceedingly dangerous on account of their being studded with numerous coral "mushrooms"—*i.e.*, enormous boulders of coral rock, which, resembling a mushroom in shape, come to within a few feet of the surface of the water. Through these passages, the tide, especially the ebb, rushes with great velocity—six or seven knots at least—and vessels when leaving the lagoon, generally waited till slack water, or the first of the flood, when with the usual strong south-east trades,

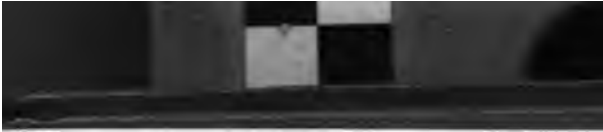
they could stem the current and avoid the dangerous "mushrooms." But no shipmaster would ever attempt either of these passages, except in the morning, when the sun was astern, and he could, from aloft, con the ship. After two or three o'clock, the sun would be directly in his face, and render it almost impossible for him to get through without striking.

Here then was the position when Evers, cheerfully smoking a cigar, and smiling all over his handsome face, gave the order to heave up. It was blowing very strongly, the tide was on the ebb, the sun was directly in our faces, and we were to tear through a narrow passage at racehorse speed without being able to see anything.

I ventured to suggest to him that it was a bit late for us to get under way.

"Not a bit of it. Come along with me up on the foreyard, and you'll see how the *George Noble* will skip through."

We certainly did skip, for before the anchor was secured, we were dashing westwards for the passage at eight or nine knots, and Evers kept calling out to the mate to make more sail. By the time we were abreast of the passage, the *George Noble* had every stitch of her canvas on her, and was fairly "humming" along at nearly thirteen knots over the smooth water, and then when she spun into the narrow passage through which a seven-knot current was tearing, her speed became terrific, and I held my breath. The second mate and boatswain were at the wheel, and the crew were standing by the braces. The silence on board was



almost painful, for the terrible roar of the current as it tore along the coral walls of the passage, deadened every sound.

“Starboard a little,” shouted Evers to a sailor stationed in the fore rigging below us, who repeated the order to a man on the rail, who in turn passed the word aft.

“Steady, there, steady!”

I tried in vain to discern anything ahead of us—the blinding, blazing sun prevented my seeing aught but a mad seething swirl of water just beneath our bows, and on each side of us. Evers, however, seemed very confident.

“We’ll be through in another two minutes—” he began, and then came a terrific shock, and both he and I were jerked off the footrope, and toppled over the yard on to the bellying foresail!

We both rolled down on top of the windlass, and landed almost in each others arms, half dazed. I sat down on deck to consider who I was, and what was the matter, and Evers made a wobbly run aft, the ship still ripping along, for we had been checked in our mad career for a second or two only.

In two or three minutes we were outside, and clear of danger, and Evers, now much subdued, brought to under the lee of the reef, and anchored. Then we lowered a boat, and made an examination of the ship for’ard. Nothing was wrong with her above her water-line, but three feet further down her stem was smashed into a pulp, and bits of timber kept coming to the surface every now and then. An hour later we had nine inches of

water in the hold, and the consequence of Evers's pig-headedness was that we had to keep the pumps going day and night, every two hours, till we rigged a windmill, which was kept going till we reached Sydney.

Six months later, the local trader of Apaian wrote to me, and told me that Evers "has improved the passage into the lagoon very much. You ran smack into a big mushroom, standing up right in the middle, and broke it off short, about fifteen feet below the surface. Hope the *George Noble* will do the same thing next time."



THE FLEMMINGS

CHAPTER I

ON a certain island in the Paumotu Group, known on the charts as Chain Island, but called Anaa by the people themselves, lived a white man named Martin Flemming, one of those restless wanderers who range the Pacific in search of the fortune they always mean to gain, but which never comes to them, except in some few instances—so few that they might be counted on one's fingers.

Two years had come and gone since Flemming had landed on the island with his wife, family, and two native servants, and settled down as a resident trader at the large and populous village of Tuuhora, where he soon gained the respect and confidence—if not the friendship—of the Anaa people, one of the proudest, most self-reliant, and brave of any of the Polynesian race, or their offshoots. For though he was a keen business man, he was just and honest in all his transactions, never erring, as so many traders do, on the side of mistaken generosity, but yet evincing a certain amount of liberality when the occasion justified it—and

the natives knew that when he told them that tobacco, or biscuit, or rice, or gunpowder had risen in price in Tahiti or New Zealand, and that he would also be compelled to raise his charges, they knew that his statement was true—that he was a man above trickery, either in his business or his social relations with them, and would not descend to a lie for the sake of gain.

Flemming, at this time, was about forty years of age; his wife, who was an intelligent Hawaiian Islander, was ten years his junior, and the mother of his three half-caste children—a boy of thirteen, another of ten, and a girl of six. Such education as he could give them during his continuous wanderings over the North and South Pacific had been but scanty; for he was often away on trading cruises, and his wife, though she could read and write, like all Hawaiian women, was not competent to instruct her children, though in all other respects she was everything that a mother should be, except, as Flemming would often tell her, she was too indulgent and too ready to gratify their whims and fancies. However, they were now not so much under her control, for soon after coming to the island, he found that one of the three Marist Brothers living at the mission was able to, and willing to give them a few hours' instruction several times a week. For this, Flemming, who was really anxious about his children's welfare, made a liberal payment to the Mission, and the arrangement had worked very satisfactorily—Father Billot, who was a good English scholar, giving them their lessons in that language.

I must now make mention of the remaining persons

constituting the trader's household—the two servants—one a man about thirty years of age, the other not more than eighteen or nineteen. They were both natives of Arorai (Hurd Island), one of the Kingsmill Group, and situated something less than three degrees south of the Equator. They had both taken service with him on their own island six years previously, and had followed his and his family's fortunes ever since, for they were both devotedly attached to the children; and when, a year after he had settled on their island, misfortune befell him through the destruction of his trading station by fire, and he found himself a ruined man, they refused to leave him, and declared they would work for him without payment until he was again in a position to begin trading—no matter how long it might be ere that took place.

For some months after the loss of all his property, Flemming worked hard and lived meanly. Most fortunately for him, he had a very good whaleboat, and night after night, and day after day, he and his two faithful helpers, as long as the weather held fine, toiled at the dangerous pursuit of shark-catching, cutting off the fins and tails, and drying them in the sun, until finally he had secured over a ton's weight of the ill-smelling commodity, for which he received £60 in cash from the master of a Chinese-owned trading barque, which touched at the island, and this amount enabled him to leave Arorai, and begin trading elsewhere—in the great atoll of Butaritari, where owing to his possessing a good boat, sturdy health, and great pluck and resolution, his circumstances so mended that he came to look on the

incident of the fire as the best thing that could have happened.

In appearance these two men were like nearly all the people of the Kingsmill Group—dark-skinned, strongly built, and with a certain fierceness of visage, born of their warlike and quarrelsome nature, and which never leaves them, even in their old age. The elder of the two, whose native name was Binoké, but who had been given the nickname of “Tommy Topsail-tie,” had this facial characteristic to a great degree, and was, in addition, of a somewhat morbid and sullen disposition, disliking all strangers. But he was yet the veriest slave to Flemming’s children, who tyrannised over him most mercilessly, for young as they were, they knew that his savage heart had nothing in it but adoration and affection for both them and their parents. Nobal, the younger man, who also had a nickname—“Jack Waterwitch” (taken from a colonial whaler in which he had once sailed) was of a more genial nature, and had constituted himself the especial guardian and playmate of the little girl Medora, who spoke his native tongue as well as himself; while Tommy Topsail-tie was more attached, if it were possible, to Flemming’s eldest boy Robert, than to any other member of the family.

After two or three years’ successful trading in the northern islands of the Kingsmill Group, Flemming had sold out his trading interests very satisfactorily, and, always eager to go further afield, had sailed for the Panmotu Group, choosing Anaa as his home, for he thought he should like the people, and do very well as a trader, for the island was but a few days’ sail from



Tahiti in the Society Group, where there was always a good market for his produce, and where he could replenish his stock of trade goods from the great mercantile firm of Brander—in those days the Whiteleys of the South and Eastern Pacific.

One afternoon, about six o'clock, when work at the trading station had ceased for the day, and the store door had been shut and locked by Mrs. Flemming, the trader was seated on his shady verandah, smoking a cigar and listening to the prattle of his little daughter, when his two boys raced up to him from the beach, and noisily asked him permission to take the smallest of the boats (a ship's dinghy) and go fishing outside the reef until the morning. They had just heard some natives crying out that a vast shoal of *tau tau*—a large salmon-like fish, greatly prized throughout the South Seas—had made their appearance, and already some canoes were being got ready.

"Who is going with you, boys?" asked Flemming, looking at their deeply-bronzed, healthy faces—so like his own, though his hair had now begun to grizzle about his sunburnt temples.

"Jack and Tom, and two Anaa men," they replied, "they sent us to ask you if they could come. They have finished the new roof for the oil-shed, and want to go very badly. Say 'yes,' father."

"All right boys. You may go. Tell your mother to give you plenty to eat to take with you—for it's only six o'clock, and I suppose you won't be home till daylight.

The delighted boys tore into the house to get their fishing tackle, whilst their mother, telling them to make

less clamour, filled an empty box with biscuit, bread, and tinned meats enough for the party of six, and in less than ten minutes they were off again, shouting their goodbyes as they raced through the gate, followed by a native woman carrying the heavy box of food.

Martin Flemming turned to his wife with a smile lighting up his somewhat sombre face.

"We shall have a quiet house to-night, Kaiulani," he said, calling her by her Hawaiian name.

"Which will be a treat for us, Martin. Those boys really make more noise every day. And do you know what they have done now?"

He shook his head.

"They have a live hawkbill turtle in their room—quite a large one, for I could scarcely move it—and have painted its back in five or six colours. And they feed it on live fish; the room smells horribly."

Flemming laughed. "I thought I could smell fresh paint about the house yesterday. Never mind, 'Lani. It won't hurt the turtle."



CHAPTER II

AT seven o'clock on the following morning the boys had not returned, and Martin Flemming, just as his wife brought him his cup of coffee, was saying that they probably were still fishing, when he heard a sound that made him spring to his feet—the long, hoarse, bellowing note of a conch shell, repeated three times.

“That’s a call to arms!” he cried, “what does it mean, I wonder. Ah, there is another sounding, too, from the far end of the village. I must go and see what is the matter.”

Scarcely, however, had he put his foot outside his door when he heard his boys’ voices, and in another moment he saw them running or rather staggering along the path together with a crowd of natives, who were all wildly excited, and shouting at the top of their voices.

“Father, father,” and the eldest boy ran to him, and scarcely able to stand, so exhausted was he, he flung himself down on the verandah steps, “father, Jack and Tom, and the two Anaa men . . . been stolen by a strange ship . . . we must . . . we must save them.”

Hastening inside, Flemming returned with a carafe of cold water, and commanding the boys not to try to speak any more just then, he poured some over their wrists, and then gave them a little in a glass to drink. When they were sufficiently "winded," they told him their story, which was, briefly, this.

In company with two canoes, they had put out to sea and began fishing. Then they parted company—the boat pulling round to the other side of Anaa, where they fished with fair success till daylight. Suddenly a small white-painted barque appeared, coming round the north end of the island. She was under very easy canvas, and when she saw the boat, backed her main-yard, and ran up her ensign.

"They want us to come aboard," said Bob, hauling in his line. "Up lines everybody."

His companions at once pulled up their lines, and took to the oars, and in a few minutes they were alongside the ship, and an officer leant over the side of the poop, and asked them to come aboard.

The boys ascended first, the four natives following; the former were at once conducted into the barque's cabin, where the captain, an old man with a white moustache, asked them their names, and then began to question them as to the number of natives on the island, &c., when they started to their feet with alarmed faces as they heard a sudden rush of feet on deck, followed by oaths and cries, and Walter the younger of the two, fancied, he heard his brother's name called by Jack Waterwitch.

"Sit down, boys, sit down," said the captain,



dropping his suave manner, and speaking angrily, "you can go on deck and be off on shore presently." As he spoke a man came below, and made a sign to him.

"All right, sir."

The captain nodded, and then told the boys to go on deck and get into their boat. They at once obeyed, but the moment they reached the deck they were surrounded by five or six of the crew, who hustled them to the gangway, and forced them over the side, despite their struggles, and their loud cries to their native friends, of whom they could see nothing whatever.

The boat's line was cast off, and as she fell astern the boys saw that a number of sailors were aloft, loosing her light sails, and in a few minutes she was some distance away from them, heading to the eastward with a light breeze. As quickly as possible the two boys set the boat's sail, and sailing and pulling, they ran straight for the weather side of the island, crossed over the reef into the lagoon, and gave the alarm to the first people they met.

"Good lads," said Flemming, "you have done all that you could do. We shall see presently what can be done to save our men."

Then turning to his wife, he bade her get ready enough provision for his three boats, and have them launched and manned by their usual crews, whilst he went to the mission to consult with Father Billot and the chiefs, for he had already heard from one of the excited natives that the barque was still very near the land, and almost becalmed; and he knew that the Anaa natives would to a man assist him in recovering the four men from captivity.

Half way to the mission house, he met the priest himself, hurrying along the shaded path, to tell him the further news that the two canoes which had accompanied the boat had just returned, after narrowly escaping capture by the barque. It appeared that they, too, had seen the barque crawling along under the lee of the land and close in to the reef, just as daylight broke, and from the number of boats she carried—she had two towing, as well as three others on deck—they imagined her to be a whaler. They paddled up alongside without the slightest suspicion of danger, and three or four of their number in the first canoe were clambering up the side when they suddenly sprang overboard, just as three or four grapnels with light chains were thrown from the bulwarks over the canoes so as to catch their outriggers, and capsize them. Most fortunately, however, only one of the grapnels caught—it fell upon the wooden grating or platform between the outrigger and the hull of one canoe, and was quickly torn away by the desperate hands of the natives—in less than a minute both canoes were clear of the ship, and racing shoreward without the loss of a single man. No attempt was made to follow them in the barque's boats, her ruffianly captain and crew evidently recognising that there was no chance of overtaking them when the land was so near.

“The villains!” exclaimed Flemming, as he and the priest set off at a run to the house of the head chief, who had just sent an urgent message for them to come and meet him and his leading men in counsel, “she must be a slaver from the coast of South America.”



The consultation with the chiefs was a hurried one, and a resolution to board the barque and recapture the four men if possible, was quickly arrived at. Over thirty canoes, and five or six boats, manned and armed by nearly two hundred of the picked men of the island, and led by Martin Flemming and three chiefs, were soon underway, and passing out through the narrow passage in the reef, went northward till they rounded the point, and saw the barque about five miles away. She had every stitch of canvas set, but was making little more than steerage way, for only the faintest air was filling her upper canvas.

The canoes and boats, at Flemming's suggestion, approached her in a half-circle, his own boat leading. It was his intention to recover the men if possible, without bloodshed, and he would first make an attempt to board the slaver—for such she was—and alone try to achieve the men's liberation by pointing out to the captain that his ship would be captured and destroyed by the infuriated natives if he refused. If he did refuse there would be a heavy loss of life—of that he (Flemming) was certain.

Apparently no notice was taken by the barque of the approaching flotilla, until it was within three quarters of a mile, then she hauled up her mainsail, came slowly to the wind, and began firing with two of the four guns she carried—nine-pounders. Flemming at once ordered all the other boats and canoes to cease pulling and paddling, and he went on alone. He was not again fired at till he came within a quarter of a mile of the vessel, when a volley of musketry was fired, together with the

two heavy guns, both of which were loaded with grape. How any one of them in the boat escaped was a marvel, for the bullets lashed the water into foam only a few yards ahead, and some, ricocheting, struck and damaged two of the oars.

To advance in face of such a fire would be madness. The barque evidently carried a large and well-armed crew, so he slewed round and pulled towards the little fleet, as those on the slaver yelled derisively, and again began firing with the nine-pounders, and small arms as well.

And then, to his bitter rage and disappointment, a puff of wind came over from the westward, and the barque's sails filled. In ten minutes she was slipping through the water so quickly that she was leaving them astern fast, and in another hour she had swept round the south end of the land, and they saw her no more.

Sad and dejected, he and his native friends returned to Tuuhora, and drawing up their boats and canoes, went to their homes in silence.



CHAPTER III

TEN years had passed, and fortune had proved kind to Martin Flemming and his family, who were now, with the exception of the eldest son, settled on the island of Rarotonga, one of the Cook's Group.

For some years after the abduction of the four unfortunate natives, Flemming had tried every possible means of ascertaining their fate, and at first thought that he would succeed, for within a few weeks after the visit of the barque to Anaa, there came news of similar outrages perpetrated by three vessels, through the Ellice, Line Islands and Paumotu Group. One of these vessels was a barque, the others were brigs, and all sailed under Peruvian colours, though many of the officers were Englishmen.

In one instance they had descended upon the unsuspecting inhabitants of the island of Nukulaelae in the Ellice Group, and carried off almost the entire population, and at Easter Island—far to the eastward, over three hundred unfortunate natives were seized under circumstances of the grossest treachery and violence, and manacled together, taken away to end their days as slaves in working the guano deposits on the Chincha Islands, off the coast of South America.

Though not then a rich man, Flemming at his own expense made a long and tedious voyage to the Chinchas. By the time he arrived there nearly a year had elapsed since the four men had been stolen, and he found that both the British and French Governments had compelled the Peruvian Government to restore all of the wretched survivors—there were but few, alas!—to their homes. Over one hundred of the wretched beings had perished of disease in the hot and stifling holds of the slavers; scores of them, attempting to regain their liberty, had been shot down, and the fearful toil in the guano pits of the Chincha Islands carried off many more.

At the Chincha Islands he was unable to gain any definite information about the four men, but was told that the British Consul at Callao might be able to tell him what had become of them—whether they had died or had been among those restored to their homes. So to Callao he went, for he was ever bearing in mind the grief of his children at the loss of their dear “Tommy Topsail-tie” and “Jacky Waterwitch,” and his promise to them that if they and their Anaa companions were alive he would bring them back.

But a bitter disappointment awaited him at Callao—for the Consul, who had been largely instrumental in forcing the Peruvian Government to liberate the captured people, gave him absolute proof that none of the four men had reached the Chinchas, for he had obtained a great deal of information from the survivors, all of which he had carefully recorded.

“Here is what Vili, a native of Nukulaelae, told me,



Mr. Flemming. He was one of those who were captured by the barque, and was rather well treated by the captain on account of his speaking English, being put into the mate's watch as he had been to sea for many years in whale ships. He says:—

‘After we of Nukulaelae had been on board the barque for about twenty days, we came to an island in the Paumotus, where the captain tried to capture two canoes full of natives but failed, though quite soon after he seized four from a boat, and they were carried down into the hold and ironed, for they had fought very hard and all were much hurt and bleeding. I spoke to them and they told me that they had been out fishing with the two sons of a white man, who was a trader on the island. The captain did not hurt the two boys, but let them go. Then a lot of canoes and boats came off and the ship fired her cannons at them, and drove them away.

‘Next day we met another ship, a small schooner, flying the German flag, and her captain came on board our ship and had a long talk with our captain, and presently an officer and six men came down into the hold, and took the irons off nine men and drove them on deck. Among these men were the four who were taken from the boat. The captain of the schooner paid our captain money for them, and took them on board his vessel, which then sailed away.’

“Now, Mr. Flemming,” resumed the Consul, “that is all I can tell you. I have written to the British Consul at Apia in Samoa, and at Levuka in Fiji, asking them to endeavour to find out the schooner's name and trace the nine men. I have no doubt but that she was

some Fijian or Samoan 'blackbirder,' and that the poor devils are working on some of the plantations in either Fiji, Samoa or Tonga. There is, therefore, good reason for you to hope that you will succeed in your search. I shall gladly give you all the assistance in my power to facilitate your enquiries."

Returning to Anaa, Flemming, through the aid of the French authorities in Tahiti, placed himself in communication with the British Consuls in Fiji and Samoa, telling them the details of the capture of the four men and of their transference with five others to another vessel, and enclosing a sum of money—all he could spare—to be given to Tommy Topsail-tie so that he and his three companions might be enabled to find their way back to Anaa.

At the end of another long weary year of hopeful expectation, he received replies from the Consuls, returning the money he had sent, and saying that after most careful inquiries, they could learn nothing of the nine men; but that they (the Consuls) had strong reason to believe that the schooner to which they had been transferred was a notorious German "blackbirder" named the *Samoa*, though the captain and the crew swore they knew nothing of the matter.

"It is quite possible," they said in their joint report, "that some or all of the men are on one of the German plantations in Samoa or Tonga, and that you will yet discover them. But the German Consuls will give us no assistance, and absolutely decline to permit us to send any one to visit the plantations, unless the managers or owners are agreeable. And, as you can imagine, the



owners and managers are *not* agreeable, and have declined in terms of great rudeness to even supply us with the names of any of their labourers, or the names of the various islands from which they come."

But even in face of this Flemming did not despair, and told his wife and children, who could not restrain their tears when they read the Consuls' report, that he would not let the matter rest. He had several friends in Samoa and Fiji—merchants, traders and ship captains, and to them he wrote asking them to institute enquiries quietly, and let him know the result.

After spending another five years on Anaa, during which time he had heard nothing of the missing men, he determined to settle on Rarotonga, where there was an excellent opportunity of making money. His eldest boy by this time was almost a grown man, and was earning his living as a supercargo of a trading vessel, running between Auckland in New Zealand and the various groups of islands in the South Pacific.

CHAPTER IV

IN the quiet little harbour of Mulifanua, situated at the western end of the island of Upolu, a fine-looking brigantine was lying at anchor, and the captain and supercargo were pacing the deck together enjoying their after-breakfast pipes.

The brigantine was the *Maori Maid* of Auckland, Captain Heselton, and the supercargo was young Robert Flemming. The vessel had run into Mulifanua Harbour owing to her having struck on a reef a few days previously whilst beating up against the south-east trades from Wallis Island to Leone Bay, a port on the island of Tutuila, one of the Samoan Group, and as she was leaking rather seriously her captain decided to run into Mulifanua, put her on the beach, and get at the leak or leaks.

“There is no need for you to stay on board, Bob,” said Heselton presently to his young supercargo. “Go ashore and stay ashore until we are ready for sea again. All going well we’ll find out where the damage is by this time to-morrow, and be afloat again in a few days. But there is nothing to keep you aboard, and you might as well put in your time shooting or



otherwise enjoying yourself; why not go and have a look at Goddeffroy's big plantation? It's only about a couple of miles away."

"Thank you, captain, I think I shall. As you know for years past I have always been hoping that during one of our cruises, I might come across some native or other on one of these plantations who might be able to tell me something about those four poor fellows who were collared by that Peruvian barque ten years ago. And this plantation of Goddeffroy's is one of the biggest in the South Seas—there are over seven hundred labourers, Line Islanders, Solomon Islanders, New Britain niggers and heaven knows what else."

"Well, you'll have a good chance now. And look here, Bob—take your time, a day or two more or less doesn't matter to us. I shall have plenty to do even after I get at this confounded leak. The rigging wants setting up badly, so we may be here any time under a week."

"Right. I'll go and have a look at the plantation; and if the manager is a decent sort of a Dutchman he might put me up. If he's a hog—which he probably is—I'll go to the native village, sleep there to-night and have a day's pigeon-shooting to-morrow."

Just then a boat was seen putting off from the shore, manned by Samoans, but steered by a white man, who as soon as he came on deck introduced himself as the local trader. He was a quiet, good-natured old fellow—an Englishman—and as soon as he learned of the mishap to the brigantine, at once offered to get a gang of natives to assist in beaching her; and then pressed

Flemming to make his house his home during the stay of the vessel.

“Thank you,” replied the young man, “I shall be very pleased. I want to have a look at the big plantation here and try to have a yarn with some of the Kingsmill Island labourers.” Then he told the trader, who was much interested, the object he had in view.

“I’m sure that the manager will let you talk to any of the labourers,” he said, “for he’s one of the “White men” kind of Dutchmen. His name is Knorr. He succeeded a regular brute of a man who used to flog the plantation hands right and left. A lot of them have run away during the past six or seven years and have taken to the mountains. They are all armed, and sometimes, when they are in want of food, will lay the Samoan villages under tribute, and if any resistance is shown, they set fire to the houses. The Samoans are terribly afraid of them, for there are two or three cannibal Solomon Islanders among them, and a Samoan has a holy terror of a man-eater.”

“Why don’t the Dutchmen capture the beggars?” asked the captain. “There are enough of them in Samoa.”

The old trader laughed—“Ay, too many, sir; too many for us poor English traders. But they have tried, time and time again, to capture these fellows, but only got badly mauled in two or three fights. There is a standing reward of two hundred dollars for every one of them, dead or alive, and about a year ago ten flash young Samoan *manaias* * set out, well armed and well

* Warriors or rather would-be warriors—young men whom the local white men usually speak of as “bucks,”—i.e., flashy, saucy fellows.



primed with grog, to surprise the escapees, who were known to be living in an almost inaccessible part of the mountains. Only four of the ten came back; the other six were shot down one by one as they were climbing the side of a mountain, and these four were made prisoners by the outlaws, who gave them such a fright that they will never get over it. It was as good as any novel to hear them talk about it, I can assure you."

"Go on, tell us the whole yarn," said the skipper of the *Maori Maid*, as he pushed a decanter of brandy towards his visitor, and take a cigar. "It's pleasant to meet an Englishman in these Dutchman-infested islands, especially when he has a good yarn to spin."

"The yarn isn't a pleasant one, captain," said the trader. "It's a d——d unpleasant one, but it's true, sir."

He lit a cigar and then resumed: "Well, after six of these flash young fellows were shot down, the other four dropped their rifles and cried out, *Fia ola! Fia ola!* (Quarter! Quarter!) and in a few minutes about a dozen of the escapees made their appearance, took away their rifles and cartridges, and tying their arms behind their backs made them march in front of them up the mountain-side till they came to a bit of a thicket in which were four or five small huts. Telling their prisoners to sit down, half of their number went away, returning in half an hour with the six heads of the men who had been shot.

"Take these heads back with you," said one of the

outlaws, who could speak Samoan, "and tell all Mulifanua that we are strong men. We fear no one, for we have plenty of guns and cartridges, and five hundred men such as you cannot take us. And say to the chief of the village, that on every fourth day, food for us must be brought to the foot of the eastern spur of the mountain. If this be not done, then shall we kill all whom we meet—men, women or children. Now go and tell the man who flogged us that some day we shall cook and eat his head, for we are very strong men.'

"Well, the four poor trembling beggars were liberated, and carrying the six heads of their comrades, they went back, and their story so terrified the people of Mulifanua that no further attempt was ever made to capture the outlaws. And although the Germans don't know of it, the villagers are to this very day, gentlemen, supplying these dangerous devils with food, and I know for a fact that sometimes two or three of them come down from the mountains and sleep in the village without fear. They have never troubled me; but very often a native boy or girl will come to me and buy a 28-lb. bag of shot, caps and powder, and I know perfectly well that it is for the 'wild men,' as the people here call the escaped men. Every one of them has not only a rifle, but a shot-gun as well, for they one night broke into the plantation store and carried off all the rifles and guns they could find."

"Take care, Bob, that they don't take some pot shots at you," said the captain, with a laugh, as his supercargo rose to get ready to go ashore with the trader.

"They would if they thought Mr. Flemming was



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a German from the plantation," said the trader, seriously, "so you had better not go too far away when you are shooting, unless you take a native guide with you. For, as I have said before, these men and the people of the village are now, I really believe, in secret friendship, or rather alliance—an alliance born out of terror on one side and savage desperation on the other."

A few minutes later young Flemming and the trader were being pulled ashore.



CHAPTER V

THE German manager of the great plantation proved to be, as the old trader had said, "one of the white-men kind of Dutchmen." He received the young super-cargo most hospitably, and insisted upon his remaining to lunch, and when Flemming told him frankly of the long quest for the four missing men, he at once became deeply sympathetic.

"You shall see every one of the six or seven hundred natives I have working for me, Mr. Flemming. They are all now scattered about in different portions of the plantation, but at five o'clock, when they knock off, I shall have them all mustered. But I am almost certain that you will not find any one of the nine who were transferred from the Peruvian slaver to the German 'black-birder,' for I have always taken an interest in these people, and know pretty well from where they all come. My predecessor here was very rough with them—the less I say about him the better—and there is now quite a number of runaways living in the bush. They have defied all efforts to capture them. Who they are, and where they come from, I cannot well tell, for the former manager never kept an accurate account of



the numbers of new arrivals brought here by the various labour vessels, nor did he specify in his books, as he should have done, from what particular islands they came. 'Natives' he considered to be a sufficient designation, and 'three years' or 'six years' indicated the time for which they were engaged. He left the identification of themselves and their islands to the captains of the various vessels which, at the end of their time, take them back again."

"I wonder if it is possible that the four men I am looking for are among the outlaws," said Flemming.

"Possible, quite possible," replied the manager, "but you will never be able to see them if they are. The gang is very desperate and determined, and though they have no animus against me personally, they would shoot me, or you, or any white man who attempted to get into communication with them."

After a little further conversation with the manager, Flemming said he would have a few hours' pigeon-shooting, returning in time to see the plantation hands mustered. Knorr wished him to take a Samoan guide, but the young man laughingly reminded him that he was half a native himself, and from his infancy almost had been used to wandering about the mountain forests of the islands of Micronesia and Polynesia; so, bidding his host good morning, he shouldered his gun and set off, and in another hour was ascending the first spur of the mountain range, which traverses the island of Upolu from one end to the other.

He had a reason for declining the services of a guide, for he had determined to attempt to reach the outlaws'

refuge, and, at the risk of his life, finding out if Tommy Topsail-tie and Jack Waterwitch were among them. The old trader had told him that one of their number was a very big man, whose legs, back, and neck were tattooed as the Kingsmill Islanders tattoo, and he (Flemming) had formed the idea, since his conversation with the manager of the plantation, that this big man was Binoké—the dear friend of his boyhood's days, the ever-wanted "Tommy Topsail-tie" of his brother and his sister Medora, the man who, with Jack Waterwitch, had stood to his father and mother in their poverty and distress, and had toiled night and day for them without recompense.

As he walked over the soft carpet of fallen leaves which covered the mountain-side so thickly that no sound came from his footsteps, he listened carefully. He knew that he was proceeding in the right direction for the outlaws' refuge—the direction the plantation manager had impressed on him to avoid—and after a two hours' stiff climb he found himself on the summit of the spur and overlooking the harbour. Far below him he could see the *Maori Maid* being hauled on to the beach, and eight miles away the beautiful little island of Manono lay basking in the sun on a sea of deepest, glorious blue.

Suddenly he heard a sound, a faint, soft creeping on the ground somewhere near him, and he knew that it was the sound of a human footstep, and that he was watched.

He laid down his gun, and stood up and pretended to closely scan the thick, leafy canopy of the mighty trees



overhead, as if he were searching for pigeons. Then his voice rang out clearly, and echoed and re-echoed in the grey and silent forest aisles.

“Binoké, Binoké! 'Tis I! Nobal, Nobal! 'Tis I who call! 'Tis I, Papu (Bob), of Anaa! I, who have sought thee long. Binoké! Nobal!”

Then came a sudden rush of feet and brown, naked bodies from all around, and in another moment the young man was almost lifted off his feet by Tommy Topsail-tie, who, clasping his mighty arms around him, pressed him passionately to his bosom.

“My boy, my boy! . . . See, 'tis I, Binoké, thy friend, thy slave, thy Binoké!” and then the savage creature wept as only wild people such as he was weep from excess of joy.

In a few minutes Flemming was hurried along by the friendly hands of six or eight of the “wild men” to their refuge further up on the mountain-side, where he found not only “Jack Waterwitch,” but one of the Anaa natives, who had been carried off ten years before; the other native of Anaa, he was told by Tommy Topsail-tie, had died a year or two previously. There were, he found, twelve natives in all—Topsail-tie, who was their leader, Jack Waterwitch, the Anaa man, four Solomon Islanders, and five others from various islands.

For an hour or more the young man conversed with his old friends, who delightedly agreed to leave their mountain retreat and go on board the brigantine as soon as she was ready to sail. The remaining eight men, however, refused to leave, although Flemming told them that they could all come down from the mountain at

night-time, and be very easily stowed away on board, and that even if they were discovered the captain would be able to protect them, should the German manager make any demand for them to be delivered over to him. But all his arguments were in vain—they shook their heads and said that never again would they go, willingly or unwillingly, upon the deep sea.

Then the supercargo and Topsail-tie made their plans, and after spending another hour or so with the escapees, Flemming shook hands with them all, and guided by Nobal, returned to the base of the mountain.

Here he parted from his companion, who quickly plunged into the forest again, and reached the plantation just as the manager was mustering the plantation hands for his inspection. Not deeming it advisable to tell his host of the discovery he had just made, he yet tried to display as much interest as possible, and after walking up and down the triple rows of men and looking at them rapidly one by one, he said that there was no one of them whom he had ever seen before. Then the manager dismissed the men, and Flemming, thanking him for his kindness, hurried on board and told his story to Captain Heselton.

Two days afterwards the *Maori Maid* was sailing slowly out through Mulifanua passage. Flemming, with the skipper beside him, was standing on the poop, looking for'ard.

“Tell them they can come up on deck now, boat-swain,” he cried, “we are a good mile off the land.”

And then the three of the four men from whom he and his brother had parted ten years before rushed up



from the hold, knelt at his feet, and laughing and sobbing like children, threw their brown arms around his legs.

Binoké rose, and stretching out his huge right arm towards the rising sun, turned his black eyes on "the boy" he so loved.

"Is it to the east we sail, Papu?"

"Ay, to the east, Binoké, far, far to the east, to a fair, fair land with green mountains and falling streams. And there awaits us my father and mother, and my brother, and Medora. And they will be well content with me, for never hast thou and Nabal been forgotten."





“FLASH HARRY” OF SAVAII

NEARLY thirty years ago, when the late King Malietoa of Samoa was quietly arming his own adherents and conciliating his rebel chiefs in order to combine against the persistent encroachments of the Germans, I was running a small trading cutter between Upolu and Savaii, the two principal islands of the group.

One day I arrived in Apia Harbour with a cargo of yams which I was selling to an American man-of-war, the *Resacca*. I went alongside at once, had the yams weighed and received my money from the paymaster, and then went ashore for a bathe in the Vaisigago River, a lovely little stream which, taking its rise in the mountains, debouches into Apia Harbour. Here I was joined by an old friend, Captain Hamilton, the local pilot, who, stripping off his clothes, plunged into the water beside me.

As we were laughing and chatting and thoroughly enjoying ourselves, a party of natives—young men and boys—emerged from the trees on the opposite bank, and casting off their scanty garments, boisterously entered the water and began disporting them-

selves, and then to my surprise I saw that their leader was a white man, tattooed in every respect, like a Samoan. He appeared to be about thirty years of age, was clean-shaven, and had bright red hair.

"Who is that fellow?" I inquired.

"One of the biggest scoundrels in the Pacific," replied my companion, "'Flash Harry' from Savaii. He deserted from either the *Brisk* (or the *Zealous*) British man-of-war, about seven years ago, and although the commanders of several other British warships have tried to get him, they have failed. He is the pet *protégé* of one of the most powerful chiefs in Savaii, and laughs at all attempts to catch him. To my knowledge he has committed four atrocious murders, and, in addition to that, he is a drunken, foul-mouthed blackguard. He only comes to Apia occasionally—when there is no British man-of-war about—and paints the town red, for although he is merely a loafing beach-comber, he is liberally supplied with money by his chief, and possesses an extensive harem as well. He simply terrorises the town when he breaks out, and insults every timid European, male and female, whom he meets."

"Why doesn't some one put a bullet through him?"

"Ah, now you're asking! Why? Porter" (a respectable Samoan trader) "told him that he would riddle him if he came inside his fence, and the scoundrel knows *me* well enough not to come into my place with anything but a civil word on his foul tongue; but then you see, Porter and I are Americans. If either or both of us shot the man no commander



of an American man-of-war would do more than publicly reprimand us for taking the law into our own hands ; but if you or any other Englishman killed the vermin, you would be taken to Fiji by the first man-of-war that called here, put on your trial for murder, and, if you escaped hanging, get a pretty turn of penal servitude in Fiji gaol."

We finished our bathe, dressed, and set out for Hamilton's house on Matautu Point, for he had asked me to have supper with him. On our way thither we met the master of a German barque, then in port, and were chatting with him in the middle of the road, when Mr. "Flash Harry" and his retinue of *manaia* (young bucks) overtook us.

The path being rather narrow we drew aside a few paces to let them pass, but at a sign from their leader they stopped. He nodded to Hamilton and the German captain (neither of whom took any notice of him) then fixed his eyes insolently on me and held out his hand.

"How do yer do, Mister. You're a nice sort of a cove not to come and see me when you pass my place in your cutter"—then with sudden fury as I put my hands in my pockets—"you, you young cock-a-hoopy swine, do you mean to say you don't mean to shake hands with a white man?"

"Not with you, anyway," I answered.

"Then the next time I see you I'll pull your—arm out of the socket," he said, with an oath, and turning on his heel he went off with his following of bucks. All of them were armed with rifles and the long beheading knives called *Nifa oti* (death-knife),

and as we three had nothing but our fists we should have had a bad time had they attacked us, for we were in an unfrequented part of the beach and would have been half murdered before assistance came. But in Samoa in those days street brawls were common.

"The next time you *do* meet him," said Hamilton as we resumed our walk, "don't give him a chance. Drill a hole through him as soon as he gets within ten paces, and then clear out of Samoa as quick as you can."

* * * * *

Quite a month after this I had to visit the little port of Asaua on the Island of Savaii; and as I was aware that "Flash Harry" was in the vicinity of the place on a *malaga*, or pleasure trip, I kept a sharp lookout for him, and always carried with me in my jumper pocket a small but heavy Derringer, the bullet of which was as big as that of a Snider rifle. I did not want to have my arm pulled out of the socket, and knew that "Flash Harry," being twice my weight almost, would give me a sad time if he could once get within hitting distance of me, for like most men-of-war's men he was very smart with his hands, and I was but a stripling—not yet twenty.

I had come to Asaua with a load of timber to be used in the construction of a church for the French Mission, and in the evening went to the resident priest to obtain a receipt for delivery. As he could not speak English and I could not speak French we had to struggle along in Samoan—to our mutual amusement. However, we got along very well, and I was about to accept



his hospitable offer to remain and have supper with him when a young chief whom I knew, named Ulufanua (“Top of a High Tree”) came in hurriedly and told us that “Flash Harry” and ten or fifteen young men, all more or less drunk, were coming to the village that night with the avowed intention of boarding the cutter under the pretence of trading, seizing all the liquor and giving me a father of a beating—the latter to avenge the insult of a month before.

Laughingly telling the priest that under the circumstances discretion was the better part of valour, I bade him goodbye, walked down to my boat, which was lying on the beach, and with two native sailors pulling, we started for the cutter, a mile away. The night was beautifully calm, but dark, and as I was not well acquainted with the inner part of Asaua Harbour and could not see my way, I several times ran the boat on to submerged coral boulders; and, finally, lost the narrow channel altogether.

Then I told one of my men, a sturdy, splendid specimen of a native of the Gilbert Islands named Te Manu Uraura (“Red Bird”) to come aft and take the steer oar, knowing that his eyesight, like that of all Polynesians, was better than that of any white man.

“Come here, Te Manu, and steer, I’ll take your oar. Your eyes are better than mine.”

The poor fellow laughed good-naturedly, and I little thought that this simple request of mine would be the cause of his being a cripple for life. He came aft, took the steer oar from me, and I, seating myself on the after thwart, began to pull. We were at this time

about thirty yards from the beach, and between it and the inner reef of the harbour. We sent the boat along for two or three hundred yards without a hitch, and I was thinking of what my cook would have for my supper, when we suddenly plumped into a patch of dead coral and stuck hard and fast.

Knowing that the tide was falling, we all jumped out, and pushed the boat off into deeper water as quickly as possible, just as half a dozen bright torches of coco-nut leaves flared up on the shore and revealed the boat dimly to those who were holding them.

At first I imagined that the chief of the village had sent some of his people to help us through the channel, but I was quickly undeceived when I heard "Flash Harry's" voice.

"I've got you now, my saucy young quarter-deck-style-of-pup. Slew round and come ashore, or I'll blow your head off."

One glance ashore showed me that we were in a desperate position. "Flash Harry," who was all but stark-naked—he had only a girdle of *ti* tree leaves round his waist—was covering the boat with his Winchester rifle, and his followers, armed with other guns, were ready to fire a volley into us, although most of them were pretty well drunk.

"They can't hit us, Te Manu," I cried to the Gilbert Islander, whose inborn fighting proclivities were showing in his gleaming eyes and short, panting breaths, "most of them have no cartridges in their guns, and they are all too drunk to shoot straight. Let us go on!"

Te Manu gripped the haft of the steer oar and swung



the boat's head round, and then I and the other native at the bow oar—a mere boy of sixteen—pulled for all we were worth just as "Flash Harry" dropped on one knee and fired.

Poor Te Manu swayed to and fro for a few moments and then cried out, "He has broken my hand, sir! But go on, pull, pull hard!"

Under a spattering fire from the beachcomber's drunken companions we pulled out into deeper water and safety, and then, shipping my oar, I sprang to Te Manu's aid. The bullet had struck him in the back of the right hand and literally cut off three of the poor fellow's knuckles. I did what I could to stop the loss of blood, and told him to sit down, but he refused, and although suffering intense pain, insisted on steering with his left hand. As soon as we reached the cutter I at once hove up anchor and stood along the coast before a strong breeze to Matautu Harbour, where I was able to have the man's hand properly attended to. He never recovered the use of it again except in a slight degree.

I never saw "Flash Harry" again, for a few months later I left Samoa for the Caroline Group, and when I returned a year afterwards I was told that he had at last found the country too hot for him and had left the island in a German "blackbirder" bound to the Solomon Islands.

* * * * *

Quite six years had passed, and then I learnt, in a somewhat curious manner, what became of him. One day in Sydney, New South Wales, three captains



and myself met for lunch at the Paragon Hotel, on Circular Quay. We were all engaged in the South Sea trade, and one of the company, who was a stranger to me, had just returned from the Solomon Islands, with which group and its murderous, cannibal people he was very familiar. (He was himself destined to be killed there with his ship's company in 1884.) He was a young man who had had some very narrow escapes and some very thrilling experiences, some of which he narrated.

We were talking of the massacre of Captain Ferguson and the crew of the Sydney trading steamer *Ripple*, by the natives of Bougainville Island in the Solomon Group, when our friend remarked—

"Ah, poor Ferguson ought to have been more careful. Why, the very chief of that village at Numa Numa—the man who cut him down with a tomahawk—had killed two other white men. Ferguson knew that, and yet would allow him to come aboard time after time with hundreds of his people, and gave him and them the run of his ship. I knew the fellow well. He told me to my face, the first time I met him, that he had killed and eaten two white men."

"Who were they?" I asked.

"One was a man trading for Captain MacLeod of New Caledonia; the other chap was some beach-combing fellow who had been kicked ashore at Numa Numa by his skipper. I heard he came from Samoa originally. Anyway the chief told me that as soon as the ship that had put the man ashore had sailed, he was speared through the back as he was drinking a coco-nut.



When they stripped off his clothes to make him ready for the oven, they found he was tattooed, Samoan fashion, from the waist to the knees. Then, as he had red hair, they cut off his head and smoke-dried it, instead of eating it with the rest of the body; they kept it as an ornament for the stem of a big canoe. A white man's head is a great thing at any time for a canoe's figure-head in the Solomons, but a white man's head with red hair is a great *mana*” (mascotte).

Then I told him that I had known the man, and gave him his antecedents.

“Ah,” he said, “I daresay if you had been there you would have felt as if you could have eaten a bit of the beggar yourself.”

“I certainly do feel pleased that he's settled,” I replied, as I thought of poor Red Bird's hand.





CONCERNING "BULLY" HAYES

I

"BULLY" HAYES! Oh, halcyon days of the sixties and seventies, when the Pacific was not, as now, patrolled by men-of-war from lonely Pylstaart, in the Friendlies, to the low-lying far-away Marshalls and the coral lagoons of the north-west; when the Queensland schooners ran full "nigger" cargoes to Bundaberg, Maryborough, and Port Mackay; when the Government agents, drunk nine days out of ten, did as much recruiting as the recruiters themselves, and drew—even as they may draw to-day—thumping bonuses from the planters *sub rosa!* In those days the nigger-catching fleet from the Hawaiian Islands cruised right away south to palm-clad Arorai, in the Line Islands, and ran the Queensland ships close in the business. They came down from Honolulu in ballast-trim, save for the liquor and fire-arms, and went back full of a sweating mass of black-haired, copper-coloured Line Islanders, driven below at dark to take their chance of being smothered if it came on to blow. Better for them had it so happened, as befel the *Tahiti* a few years ago when four hundred of

these poor people went to the bottom on their way to slavery in San José de Guatemala.

Merry times, indeed, had those who ran the labour vessels then in the trade, when Queensland rivalled the Hawaiian Islands in the exciting business of "black-birding," and when Captain William Henry Hayes, of Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.—vulgarly called "Bully" Hayes—came twice a year to fair Samoa with full cargoes of oil, copra, and brown-skinned kanakas, all obtained on the stalwart captain's peculiar time-payment system.

* * * * *

One hardly ever hears the name of the redoubtable Bully mentioned nowadays, yet it is scarcely thirty years ago since his name was a power all over the wide Pacific, from Manila to Valparaiso. In those days did a German trading-vessel in the Islands sight a white-painted brig with yacht-like lines and carrying Cunningham's patent topsails, the Teutonic skipper cracked on all his ship could stagger under, and thanked heaven when he saw the stranger hull-down; for Bully, with his *fidus achates*, the almost equally notorious Captain Ben Peese, had a penchant for boarding Dutchmen and asking for a look at their chronometers, and in his absent-minded way, taking these latter away with him.

And in Sydney, and Melbourne especially, people will remember the gay, dashing, black-whiskered Yankee captain who, in the sixties, came to these ports in a flash clipper ship, where he spent his money royally, flirting—alas! if he had but stopped at that—with every accessible woman of high or low degree—provided



she was fair to look upon—and playing the devil generally in every known and unknown manner, and who then sailed gaily away to China, neglecting to attend to many little financial matters in connection with the refitting of his ship, and leaving the affections of a number of disconsolate beauties in a very bad state of repair.

The writer happened to know the gentleman well, and although it is now sixteen years since his body was thrown to the sharks among the lagoons of the Marshall Group, it is not too late to rescue his memory from much undeserved obloquy. Many a fancifully embroidered tale has been told and printed of the terrible "massacres" he perpetrated among the inhabitants of the South Seas. These massacres were purely apocryphal and only worthy of appearing—as they did in the first place—in an unreliable daily paper in San Francisco.

A man's true character is generally revealed by sudden misfortune. The writer sailed with Hayes for nearly two years, and was with him when, perhaps, the heaviest stroke of ill-luck he ever experienced befell him. In March of 1874 his brig *Leonora* ground herself to death on the jagged coral of Strong's Island, in the Caroline Group, and "Bully" seemed for the nonce a broken man. But few people knew that beneath that gay, laughing, devil-may-care exterior there lay a whole world of dauntless courage and iron resolution; that six months after the brig was destroyed he would, by unwearying toil and the wonderful fascination he exercised over his fierce and ruffianly crew, find himself a wealthier

man than when he trod his brig's deck with a full cargo of oil beneath his feet and ten thousand dollars in his cabin.

* * * * *

Let me first of all, though, before relating all that befell us during our sojourn on Strong's Island, where I, at least, spent many long, happy months, speak of the *Leonora*, once the *Waterlily*, and *alias* the *Luna*, the *Leonie*, and the *Racinga*. As the *Waterlily* she was first known, and under that name sailed her maiden voyage in the opium-trade, and beat the record. At this time Hayes made his appearance at one of the Treaty Ports in a ship named the *Old Dominion*. On the way out from New York his crew had mutinied, headed by the steward, a Greek. In the fight that ensued Hayes killed the Greek outright by a blow of his fist, and threw another with such violence against a deck-house that he died in a few hours. An inquiry was held, and Hayes, so it was stated, came out of it well. The *Old Dominion* was sold, and Hayes entered the Imperial Chinese service as commander of a gunboat. Another gunboat was commanded by one Ben Peese. Of this period of his life Hayes never cared to speak, but the story of Peese and himself was given as follows:—

The two became friends, and in conjunction with some mandarins of high rank, levied a system of blackmail upon the Chinese coasting junks that brought them—not the junks—in money very rapidly, and Hayes's daring attack on and capture of a nest of other and real pirates procured for him a good standing with the Chinese



authorities. Peese soon got into trouble, however, and when a number of merchants who had been despoiled had succeeded in proving that his gunboat was a worse terror to them than the pirates whom he worried, he disappeared for a time. The *Waterlily*, which was then on the point of sailing for Calcutta, was, at this time, chartered at a big figure by some rich merchants to take a cargo of provisions to Rangoon. Shortly after her departure Hayes resigned and went to Macao. Here he was joined by his colleague, in command of the *Waterlily*. How Peese had got possession of her was not known. Hayes told people that his friend had bought her, but those intimate with Peese knew a great deal better. Anyhow, some months later, the merchants who chartered her said that Peese, who had been given command after his forced resignation from the Imperial service, had landed them somewhere in the Straits, taken all their dollars, sold the cargo to the Dutch military authorities, and cleared out.

And then with a new ship, a new crew—many of whom were Hayes's and Peese's former Chinese naval service pirates—the partners sailed for the Bonin Islands, where Peese was well known, and had lived before. Two days ere making the Bonins a ship was sighted ashore on a reef. It was a gunboat from Macao with an official on board, bound to the Bonin Islands to investigate the murder of a Portuguese captain and mate. A boat was lowered from the *Waterlily*, and Peese, who spoke Spanish well, learned from the captain that the gunboat, which was then hard and fast, had run ashore in the night and bumped a big hole in herself just amid-

ships. For a thousand dollars Peese agreed to stand by them and save all he could, including her four guns. The guns were rafted to the *Waterlily*, then the small arms and stores followed in the boats belonging to the gunboat. At dusk Hayes went aboard the wrecked ship and took the brig's Chinese carpenter with him. On examination he said the ship could be got off again if she could be canted over and a sail "fothered" over the hole temporarily. This the gunboat captain agreed to try, and signalled for his boats to return from the *Waterlily*. After working all night the thing was done, and the captain and officers were profuse in their expression of admiration at Hayes's skill. As the tide fell the carpenters got to work, and the gunboat was made watertight. Under Hayes's direction, at flood-tide, she was then kedged over the reef into the lagoon, and anchored in smooth water. Peese and Hayes then arranged to bring in the *Waterlily* at next tide, lay her alongside the gunboat, and put the guns and stores aboard again, agreeing to take the captain's order on Macao for 700 dollars and 800 dollars in cash. But next morning the brig was nowhere to be seen, and although the captain had his ship he was minus his big guns, many small arms, and stores to the value of 2,000 or 3,000 dollars. In attempting to get under way he again ran ashore, and remained hard and fast for a week.

Meanwhile Hayes and Peese had gone off on a southerly course to the Pelew Group where the cannons were sold to the chiefs, and the two captains gave a feast, and made merry generally, and got rid of nearly all their crew, taking Pelew men and seven Japanese in their places.

For a week or so all went well, and then Hayes and Peese fell out—over a woman, of course. Peese had bought a very beautiful girl from one of the chiefs for 250 dollars, which sum, he told Hayes privately, he did not intend to pay. Hayes insisted on his comrade either paying the sum agreed on or giving her up. Peese, declaring he would do as he liked, drew his pistol and ordered the girl into the boat. Hayes tore the weapon from him, and seizing the girl with one hand, pointed the pistol at Peese and told him to go on board. Peese was no coward, but he knew his man, and sulkily retired. With all Hayes's wickedness he was not entirely heartless. He asked the girl to tell him if she was afraid of Peese. She said "No!" and then Bully quietly told her to follow his fellow-captain aboard. But Peese never forgave him, and from that day the two mutually distrusted each other.

After cruising about the Western Carolines for two or three months, and in some mysterious way filling up the brig, now named the *Leonora*, with a cargo of coco-nut oil, and getting a ton of hawk-bill turtle-shell, worth 6 dollars a pound, the two worthies appeared in Apia Harbour, Samoa. Here they sold the cargo and obtained a commission from the firm of Johann Cæsar Godeffroy and Sons, of Hamburg—a firm that in Polynesia rivalled, in a small way, old John Company—to procure for them two hundred or three hundred Line Island labourers at 100 dollars per head.

In those days the most respected storekeeper in Apia was a retired mariner—a Captain Turnbull—a stout old man, slow of speech, and profoundly, but not obtrusively,

religious. People used to wonder how it was that "Misi Pulu," the shrewdest business man in the group, would supply Hayes with 1,000 or 2,000 dollars' worth of trade, and merely take his I O U, while refusing to give credit to any other soul. Spoken to on the matter, the gruff old man replied, "That's my business, but I'll tell you why I trust a man like Hayes and won't trust any one here. I know the man, and I've told him what none of you would dare to tell him, that I looked upon his course of life with horror. He laughed at me and said, with a dreadful oath, that if ever he could do me a 'good turn' he would. That pleased me, and when he came to me a week afterwards and said that he wanted new canvas and running gear, but the Dutchmen wouldn't sell him any on credit, I said I would—and did, and he paid me, and I'll give him a few thousand dollars' credit any day."

Bully and Peese sailed for the Ellice and Gilbert groups, and soon news reached Sydney that they had been playing havoc with the traders there. With the traders of Captain Eury, and those of Captain Daly, of the Sydney brig *Lady Alicia*, they were very rough, appropriating all their oil and other native produce and giving them sarcastically written receipts. Hayes stated that this was in retaliation for Daly having visited his (Hayes's) stations in some of the Kingsmill Islands, and having been too friendly with some of the local fair.

When the brig returned to Samoa, Hayes alone was in command; the voluble, bearded Peese had, he said, sold him his interest in the ship and gone to China



again. People talked and said that Hayes had killed him, but as the strength of the big captain's right arm was well known in Samoa, nobody talked too loud. It was on this occasion that Hayes "had" the German firm for some thousands of dollars. It seems that in returning through the Kingsmill and Gilbert Groups he found a number of the German firm's traders in terror of their lives, the natives having warned them to clear out or be killed, they would have no white men on their islands. Hayes consented to give them all passages to Samoa—for a consideration, of course, and they agreed on behalf of their firm to pay him each 50 dollars passage money—a reasonable enough sum. Most of them had large quantities of oil and copra—this also was shipped. After the last island had been visited, Hayes called them together in the cabin and addressed them: "Now, boys, I've promised to give you all passages to Samoa, and I will—if you do what I want. Now you've all got money belonging to the German firm. Well, each of you must give me 50 dollars, and if you take my advice you'll stick to the remainder. One thing you all know as well as I do, and that is, that the Dutchmen will take your souls out of their cases if you owe them anything. As for the oil and copra I'll see to that. That's all I've got to say, and if any of you won't agree to this let him come on deck and try and convince me." The traders grinned and consented to take the offer of a passage and the privilege of annexing the firm's dollars, and each paid his 50 dollars. When Hayes got to Samoa, Weber, the German manager, interviewed Bully, who detailed the dangers the traders had escaped, and genially said, "I

hardly like to make you pay for your traders' passages, but as I have such a heavy cargo for you, you won't object to pay me a trifle—say 50 dollars each. They've all got money for you as well as oil and copra." Weber paid, Hayes giving an acknowledgment. Then Weber sent his cargo-boats to unload the brig. He was rather surprised when Hayes sent him a note:—

Brig *Leonora*, APIA.

"DEAR SIR,—You have forgotten that you have not yet made any arrangements with me about the freight of your oil and copra. I now demand freight on 200,000 lbs. copra at 1 cent per lb., 2,000 dollars; for the oil, a lump sum of 500 dollars; in all, 2,500 dollars. Unless the freight is paid at once, and delivery taken forthwith, I will proceed to New Zealand and sell to recoup myself.—W. H. HAYES."

The German firm was furious at this trick, but knowing what Hayes was and fearing to lose everything, they paid and took delivery, and Hayes, as he paid over, told Weber that he would always have a good opinion of him in future for his prompt manner in settling up. Weber gasped, but said nothing.

Just about this time the American corvette *Narrangansett* steamed into Apia Harbour. It had been rumoured around Polynesia for some time previously that certain charges had been made against Bully by American citizens. What the exact nature of these charges were has never been known. Anyhow, the captain of the corvette heard that Hayes was at anchor in Apia, and came down full speed from Pago Pago in Tutuila. Captain Edward Hamilton was then pilot, and brought the *Narrangansett* in. The moment the anchor



was down, an armed boat's crew dashed aboard the *Leonora* and took possession. The officer in command had a surprise in store for him, when, entering the brig's cabin, he saw seated at the table not the truculent, piratical ruffian he expected to see, but a quiet, stout man of herculean proportions, who bowed politely and said, "Welcome on board the *Leonora*, sir. Have you come to seize my ship and myself? Well now, don't apologise, but sit down a while until my steward brings you a glass of wine, and then I'll go and see what all this is about." This officer afterwards told Hamilton that he was so struck with Bully's cool effrontery, and his equally genial smile, that he did sit down and take a drink, and then Hayes accompanied him to the corvette. As the boat ran alongside, the officers and bluejackets not on duty thronged the side to see the famous pirate, who walked calmly to the quarter-deck, and, singling out the captain (Maude, I believe, was his name), said, "How do you do, sir? I am happy to see my country's flag again in these seas; but what the hell do you mean, sir, by putting an armed crew on my deck? By God, sir, if you don't give me good reasons I'll make you repent it." The corvette captain stood quite unmoved, although there was a suppressed titter heard amongst his officers.

"I pardon you your offensive language, Captain Hayes, as I daresay you feel excited. If you will come below I will show you good authority for my action. I have orders to arrest you and investigate serious charges against you. I trust, however, that you will be able to clear yourself."

The quiet, gentlemanly manner of the naval officer acted like a charm upon Hayes. The fierce glitter in his bright blue eyes died out, and bowing to the corvette captain he turned to the group of officers, and in a bluff sincere manner, said: "Gentlemen, I apologise to your captain and to you for my insulting manner. I see that I have acted in an unbecoming way; but I am a hasty man, yet quick to make amends when I am in the wrong."

The officers returned his salute, and then Bully went below and listened with an unmoved face to the warrant for his arrest. He was allowed to write a letter to the shore, and given the liberty of the ship whilst the captain of the *Narrangansett* was preparing for the trial. A notification was sent to the three Consuls of his seizure, and asking them to attend and verify the charges made to them by various persons against Hayes. None but the German Consul responded, and his witnesses (traders whose stations had been cleaned out by Hayes) utterly broke down. One look at those steady, steel-blue eyes was enough for them. They knew what was in store for them if any of them ever crossed Bully's path again, and slunk away to their German protectors. After two hours' investigation, the captain broke up the court, and formally told those present that he would announce his decision in writing.

Two hours afterwards the commander of the *Narrangansett* wrote a brief note to the Consuls, stating that he would not—from the unreliable and contradictory evidence—be justified in taking Hayes to the United States, and added some severe remarks about the skulking and terrified manner of the witnesses.



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Then Hayes was told he was a free man, and straightway the prisoner became the guest, and Bully made a neat little speech.

"Gentlemen, I thank you for your kindness and courtesy to me. You have done me a good service. If I went to the States now and told how I had been seized by a tyrannical American officer, it would make me a rich man. I could run for President. I could get in, too. I could paint you all as a crew of piratical ruffians disgracing the uniform of the greatest country in the world, and the papers would back me up. They would make me President of a big bank, and the Secretary of the Navy would keep the *Narrangansett* at sea for another two years—to save you from getting lynched by an indignant nation. But I am just going to be good and generous and remain in obscurity; and to-morrow night I shall be proud and happy if you will honour me by coming to my house and see the pirate in his lair."

In the afternoon Bully "dressed ship" and gave his crew liberty. They went into Matafele, the German quarter of Apia, and made a hideous disturbance; the *Narrangansett* sailors joined in, and, only for some officers being present, the German residents would have had a bad night of it. Hayes's crew were all gloriously drunk, so were some of the *Narrangansett* men, and a lot of flash Samoan *manaia*, i.e., "bucks," lent a hand in the proceedings; for even in those days the Germans were as much hated by the natives as they are at the present time.



II

BEFORE detailing my own experiences of the lamented "Bully," I must mention some other incidents in his career which will give a fair illustration of the notoriety he had acquired, and of his keen sense of humour. Long before these two gentlemen (Bully Hayes and Ben Peese) had commenced to exploit the Ellice, Gilbert, Kingsmill, Marshall and Caroline Groups, Bully, then owner of a small, fast-sailing schooner, had made unto himself a name—particularly as a connoisseur of Island beauty—among the Marquesas, Society, Hervey and Paumotu Groups, from Nuka-hiva to Rapa-nui (Easter Island), that ethnographical mystery of the Southern Seas, whose gentle and amiable people, thirty years ago, met with so dreadful a fate at the murderous hands of the Peruvian slavers.

* * * * *

Soon after the slavers had gone from the South Seas a story was current in Eastern Polynesia that Bully had landed armed boats' crews at Aana, in the Paumotu Archipelago, and seized a number of girls whom he sold to Chilian and Peruvian buyers. But, as a matter of fact, Hayes never *sold* a native girl, though he was



always willing to barter for a new charmer any member of his harem who had palled upon his fastidious tastes. And if the other man in these little matters evinced the slightest want of trade-reciprocity, he generally regretted it, for he would lose the household chattel, and getting nothing for her, save perhaps lumps and excoriations, or perhaps a sarcastic note informing him that the writer could not afford to waste time haggling over so trifling a matter as the price of a native Venus.

While two of the fleet of Peruvian slavers appeared among the Ellice Group, the other two remained to "work" Easter Island, the which they did successfully, carrying away all the able-bodied men and comely women they could seize (three hundred), to die miserably in guano-pits of the Chinha Islands. The vessels which "worked" the Ellice Group were a barque and a brig. The brig was commanded by a big Irishman, and simply because he was a big man and spoke in English to the natives, it was reported in the Hawaiian missionary press that the slaver captain was Bully. The natives of Nukulaelae, an island which suffered severely from the slavers' visit, always maintained for long afterward that it was Hayes (whom they had never actually seen), because the *ihivaka* (captain) was a tall, bearded man, who kept knocking his sailors down every minute if they were not quick in their movements; and this was the commonly accepted description of Bully and one of his habits.

But at the time the two Peruvians were cruising through the Ellices, Bully was exploiting the Paumotu Archipelago, and arousing the anger of the French authorities, by his irregular business methods. For

instance, he would "buy" pearl-shell from the traders and kick them over the side if they had the audacity to ask for payment. In accordance with his custom, Bully, on this cruise, devoted a good deal of time to studying the soft-eyed Paumotuan *vahine*; and after filling his schooner with a fair amount of plunder, he did, it is stated, take away some ten or fourteen young Paumotu women—not to Chili or Peru, but merely on an extended and indefinite pleasure trip. Most of these young ladies were desirous of getting to Tahiti, where they believed their charms would be better appreciated than in their own island homes. In his characteristic way *Il capitano galantuomo* offered them free passages. Passing through the Society Group and not entering Papeite Harbour (possibly on account of his strained relations with the French naval authorities) he made his way to the Marquesas. Here some four or five of his lady passengers elected to remain with newly-found lovers, either white or native; and Bully always blessed the union of two happy hearts by recording the affair in his humorously-kept log and giving a spree. If the bridegroom was a white man, Bully would also "buy" his oil, fungus and cotton, make him very drunk, place his laughing and blushing bride in his arms, and then, in his absent-minded way, see him over the side into his boat and sail away without paying. Bully used to say that his defective memory was the cause of all the malignant slanders set afloat about him. And, as regarded women, he used to remark he also suffered from the curious complaint of "moral astigmatism." The rest of the girls reached home somehow, after



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undergoing a pleasant and varied experience, each being the happy possessor of one of his peculiar and characteristically written testimonials.

It was Bully's humour to give these precious documents to the time-expired members of his harem, in the same manner as an English mistress would give a certificate of character and efficiency to a departing maid. Some of these papers are still extant in Tahiti and Mangareva. Many years ago when buying turtle at the little island of Rurutu, I saw one pasted on a doorpost in a native house. In the Western Carolines and the Pelew Group, when whale ships were plentiful and prosperous, the native girls preserved these "characters" by gumming the paper (often upside down) on a piece of pandanus leaf bordered with devices in bead-work. When a fresh ship arrived, the damsels would bind these around their pretty little foreheads after the manner of phylacteries—and they were always read with deep interest by the blubber-hunting skippers and mates and the after-guard generally. Bully's "characters" ran somewhat in this wise:—

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

I, William H. Hayes, hereby certify that the bearer of this, Marutahina of Vahitahi, was with me for four or five months, and I can confidently say that I can recommend her to any one in need of an active young wife, general help, or to do chores. She is a very good girl, and the sole support of her mother—an old thief with a tattooed back who lives on Reka Reka.

* * * * *

About 1871, the newspapers on the Pacific slope had a good deal to say of Bully's doings. The *Daily Alta*



of San Francisco used to speak of him as a venturesome and high-spirited American gentleman, upholding the honour of his flag in the South Seas by disregarding the hateful tyranny of petty British Consuls; while the San Francisco *Bulletin* called him a vile and brutal miscreant who should be hanged on the same gallows with *Alabama Semmes* and *Shenandoah Wardell*. (Apropos of the latter gentleman, it is interesting to remember that the Melbourne (Victoria) Club gave a ball at which the adoring women cut off as souvenirs the uniform buttons of the gallant pirate and his officers.) The spitfire *Chronicle* "claimed" that Captain William Henry Hayes was one of Nature's gentlemen, and "was certainly not the cause of a terrible affliction that had befallen the editor of a certain esteemed morning contemporary." (The wife of the editor referred to had eloped with some one.)

* * * * *

During a trading cruise in the Gambier Islands, the captain of our ship saw some young girls whom Hayes had bought from the King of Aana (one of the Chain Islands). They were very young, very scantily dressed, and without doubt very beautiful. They were always chaperoned, day and night, by two old women. One of these ancient dames named Tuna (the Eel) told our captain that, by and by, the "big captain" would come and take them. Tuna had quite a fund of anecdotes about Bully, whom she regarded as immeasurably superior to any white man she had ever seen. When she was a young and giddy girl of sixteen, she had been much admired, so she said, by Lord John—and the officers of




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His Majesty's ship —. Bully Hayes, she believed, was Lord John's spirit returned in another and much stronger body and better shape; and just as she had fallen in love with the man-of-war captain, so had all the Aana girls with his latter-day double.

* * * * *

At this time, the only white man on the island was a young American lad of about nineteen, and Tuna, and her long-haired, dark-eyed "boarding-school" came to his house, where they sat on an upturned canoe and drank stone-gin (Tuna took hers neat) while teaching him to pronounce properly the Paumotu language. Heavens! what eyes those girls possessed! Like stars they glowed with slumbering liquid fire—the fire of a quick-blooded and passionate race. Any one of these five island girls, our chief mate used to say, would have utterly demoralised even a Trappist monastery, had the holy brothers seen her face peeping in during their devotions. This island, Nukutavake, had but few inhabitants, most of whom had been brought there by Hayes, who, they said, would come again in a year or so, and take them back to Aana and Maga-Reva. They were all political offenders, and to escape death they besought Bully to take them to Nukutavake until "the wrath of the chiefs was dead." Bully, who had an idea that there was a lot of pearl-shell on Nukutavake, gave them all a passage, and also the two old women and the girls before mentioned. One of the latter, Talalua, told the young trader that Kapeni Hesi (Hayes) would have taken her with him but the ship was too small, and he had no more room, and there were two girls from



Huaheine—"dogs with much gold in their ears"—with him, who threatened to give her to the sharks if she came aboard. During our stay at this island a schooner from Tahiti came to an anchor, and we learnt from the young American that he was to be removed to another island called Vairaatea. He sailed the following morning, and his departure was marked by the tearful farewells of Bully's beauties and old Tuna, who embraced him and rubbed noses, and wept gin-odorous tears of unalloyed gratitude when he gave her three bottles of liquor. To each of Hayes's nymphs he also presented a piece of book muslin (twelve yards each) and a bottle of musk valued at 2 dollars a bottle. Talalua and Marami each gave him some splendid pieces of hawk-bill shell, and the others contributed among them a silver ring. Poor girls! they had no more to give—a grass *titi* round their shapely loins and a few silver or gold rings, and ear pendants, being all their worldly wealth and clothing combined. Our young friend was solemnly cautioned never to let Kapeni Hesi know about the turtle-shell and other gifts, or his anger would "eat them up."

On hearing of this farewell testimonial business, the skipper of the schooner that was taking the young fellow away became greatly excited—Hayes, he said, would put his own construction on the gifts. To this, in his youthful innocence, the youth replied that he didn't care, as it was his business to make a present if he chose; whereupon the skipper, a jolly old sea-dog named Tom English, told him that that was all very well, but that he (English) would be looked upon as an



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accessory, and Hayes would make him suffer for it when they met again.

"Accessory to what?" said the wondering youth.

"D—— your thick skull, you young ass, why, accessory to makin' love to his girls."

This amused us immensely, but as the lad saw that English was serious, and was equally determined not to take the presents back, he wrote a note as follows and showed it to the old fellow, who said it might possibly pass with Bully:—

CAPT. HAYES.

Dr. to —, Agent for Messrs. — of Sydney,	
1 piece muslin, 12 yards per Talalua	... \$8.00
1 " " " " Marami	... \$8.00
1 " " " " Sara...	... \$8.00
1 " " " " Louise	... \$8.00
1 " " " " Tamarua	... \$8.00
5 bottles scent (musk) at \$1.00 \$5.00
	<hr/>
	\$20.00

Below this he added:—

CAPT. HAYES, DEAR SIR,—The above-mentioned I have supplied as per bill. I will feel obliged if you will pay the \$20.00 to any of our firm's vessels on my account, I hope that, as I have not charged you native prices, you will pay me soon,

Yours, &c.

He then handed the bill to old Tuna, and told her that she must give it to the captain when he reached Nukutavake. When he did meet Bully a long time afterwards in Samoa, Hayes paid up like a man. But long before this old Tuna had given the trader's bill and letter to Hayes. Two years later the young trader



found awaiting him at the American Consulate at Tahiti,
the following letter :—

MR. — DEAR SIR,—I received your note and bill for supplying some of my household with some rotten cheese-cloth out of your store, which you have the infernal impertinence to call muslin; also, five bottles of stinking bilge-water, labelled musk. I don't know who you are, but you can tell your employers from me, that I will see them roasted before I will give my good money for their filthy and disgusting Sydney trade goods, and when I drop across you, you will get a head put on you that will teach you not to again presume to interfere in my domestic affairs.

Yours very sincerely,
WM. HENRY HAYES.



III

THREE or four years passed by, during which time the writer cruised about from island to island in the North and South Pacific—sometimes living ashore as a trader, sometimes voyaging to and fro among the many groups as supercargo or recruiter in the labour trader; and then one day the schooner, in which I then served as supercargo, reached Samoa, and there I accepted the dignified but unsatisfactory financial position of inter-island supercargo to a firm of merchants doing business in Apia, the distracted little capital of the Navigator's Island. At this time, the late Earl of Pembroke, the joint author with Dr. Kingsley of "South Sea Bubbles," was in Apia Harbour in his schooner yacht *Albatross*, and every day we expected to see the French Pacific Squadron steam into the port and capture the numerous German ships then laying at anchor there. But the gallant Admiral Clouet, who commanded, disdained such work as this—he was willing and eager to fight any German warships that he could come across, but had no inclination for the inglorious task of seizing unarmed merchantmen.

For two years or so I remained in the employ of the

trading firm. Hayes then lived in Apia—or rather at Matautu, on the east side of Apia Harbour. When I say lived there, I mean that Samoa was his headquarters, for he was absent six months out of the twelve, cruising away in the North West Pacific among the Caroline and Marshall Groups. His house at Matautu Point was sweetly embowered in a grove of coco-nut and breadfruit trees, and here the so-called pirate exercised the most unbounded hospitality to the residents and to any captains (not Germans) visiting Samoa. Sometimes we would meet, and whenever we did he would urge me to come away with him on a cruise to the north-west; but duty tied me down to my own miserable little craft, a wretched little ketch of sixty tons register, that leaked like a basket and swarmed with myriads of cockroaches and quite a respectable number of centipedes and scorpions.

But it so came about that that cruise with Bully Hayes was to eventuate after all; for one day he returned to Samoa from one of his periodical cruises and told the owners of the aforesaid basket that he could sell her for them to the King of Arhnu—one of the Marshall Islands—for quite a nice sum. And the owners, being properly anxious to get rid of such a dangerous and unprofitable craft before she fell to pieces, at once consented.

Hayes sailed in the *Leonora* in the month of November, and it was agreed that I was to follow in *The Williams* (that being the name of my semi-floating abode of misery) in the following month, and meet him at Milli Lagoon, in the Marshall Islands. Here we



were to doctor up the wretched little vessel as well as we possibly could, and then send her over to the Island of Arhnu in the same group, and defraud the monarch of that place of £1,000 by handing over the vessel to him.

Of the miseries and hardships of that voyage from Samoa to the Marshall Islands, I shall not speak. After a passage of forty-three days we reached Milli Lagoon, where we found Hayes awaiting us in the *Leonora*. The moment our anchor had touched bottom, I packed up my traps and told Hayes I had done with *The Williams*, and refused to go any further in her unless she was carried on the deck of another vessel. With his carpenter—a pig-eyed Chinaman—he made a survey of the vessel, and then told me that she was so rotten and unseaworthy that he would not take delivery of her. The captain, a gin-sodden little Dutchman, and the crew were given quarters on shore at the house of Hayes's local trader, where they were to remain till some passing ship gave them a passage back to Samoa. The ketch was then beached, as Hayes considered that she might eventually be patched up sufficiently to sell to the King of Arhnu, when the *Leonora* returned from her cruise to the islands of the North-west Pacific, in six months' time. As I had received no salary from my employers for nearly twelve months (and did not expect any), I consented very cheerfully to this arrangement, and then agreed to sail with Hayes as supercargo.

We sailed from Milli Lagoon for the Kingsmill Group a week later, and visited nearly every island in the cluster, buying coco-nut oil and other produce from the natives and the few scattered white traders. At Arorai,

the southernmost island of the group, we found the natives in a state of famine owing to a long and disastrous drought. The condition of these poor people was truly pitiable to see, and the tears came to my eyes when I saw them, scarcely able to stand, crawling over our bulwarks, and eagerly seizing the biscuits and dishes of boiled rice that Hayes gave them with an unstinting hand. They begged us most piteously to take them away somewhere—they cared not where, Samoa, Fiji or Queensland—where they could work on the plantations and at least get food. Five of them ate so voraciously, despite all our endeavours to prevent it, that they died the following day. On the following morning, Hayes called several of the head men of the island into his cabin, and told them that if they were willing, he would take one hundred of the people—men, women, and children—to the German trading station and plantation at Ponapé in the Caroline Islands. Here, he told them, they would have to work for three years for 5 dollars per month each. If, at the end of six months, they found that the Germans did not treat them well, he would bring them back again to their own island on his next voyage to Ponapé. They accepted his offer with the strongest protestations of gratitude, and before noon we sailed with over a hundred of the poor people on board. Before we left, however, Hayes gave the remainder of the population nearly a ton of rice and several casks of biscuits. "You can pay me when the sky of brass has broken and the rain falls, and the land is fertile once more," said the so-called pirate.

We made a quick passage to the Caroline Islands,



touching at Kusaie or Strong's Island on our way, and on a Sunday evening swept into Jakoits Harbour on the island of Ponapé before a strong trade-wind. Here we made engagements for our passengers with a German planter, and two days later we again were at sea, bound for the western portion of the Carolines.

For the following three or four months, the brig cruised among the other islands of the Western Carolines, buying copra and turtle-shell in considerable quantities; for the much-maligned "Bully," despite his moral obliquity of vision in his commercial dealings with the merchants of Tahiti and other Polynesian ports, yet possessed the confidence of the wild Caroline Islanders to a remarkable degree. Then we returned to Ponapé, where we remained a month, wooding and watering and cleaning the ship's bottom by the aid of native divers of both sexes.

Leaving Ponapé we drifted rather than sailed back to the eastward, and one morning in March we again saw the verdant heights of beautiful Kusaie or Strong's Island, about ten miles away. On our first visit we had anchored at Coquille Harbour, a lovely lake of deepest blue, on the lee side of the island, where the king had supplied us with all the provisions we wanted; and Hayes had promised to return again in six months and buy a large quantity of coco-nut oil that his Majesty was keeping for him: and in pursuance of that promise the *Leonora* had now returned to the island.

As the breeze freshened we worked up to Lelé, the principal harbour of the island, where Togusā, the king, resided, and in a few hours we were boarded by a number

of white men, whom we had last seen at two lonely spots near the equator called Pleasant and Ocean Islands. In a few minutes we learnt that in consequence of their lives being in imminent danger from the natives, they, accompanied by their native wives, families, and over one hundred natives connected with them by marriage, had escaped from the islands in two whaleships, and landed at Kusaie, where they were at that moment causing old King Togusā a terrible amount of trouble by their wild and insolent demeanour. Their leader was a white-haired old ex-man-of-war's man, named Harry Terry. He was the doyen of the hardy, adventurous class among whom he had lived for over fifty years, and though exceedingly fond of square gin, was a thoroughly decent old fellow, and tried to restrain his own and his comrades' native followers as much as possible. Harry, when he came on board, was accompanied by about half a dozen other white men, all armed with revolvers, and all half-seas over. After a brief consultation with Hayes, they agreed to pay him a thousand dollars to take them and their belongings to Eniwetok (or Brown's Range) and Arrecifos (Providence Island) two large atolls situated about 10 degrees North. Both of these places were very thinly populated, and Arrecifos was Hayes's secret rendezvous in the North Pacific. His was the first ship that had ever sailed into its lagoon, and the vast groves of coco-nuts that clothed the low-lying island had decided him to return there at some future time with native labourers and turn the coco-nuts into oil. The traders were highly delighted at the prospect of securing homes in two such places to themselves, and agreed to sell



Hayes all the oil they produced during the next five years, and give him one barrel out of every five as a tribute of recognition of his ownership of Providence Island and Eniwetok.

On the following day the whole lot came on board, and we left Lelé Harbour to proceed down the coast to a little harbour named Utwe, where Hayes intended to water the ship and buy fresh provisions for the voyage to Providence Island. Just before we sailed, the King and Queen—the latter a very pretty and charming little woman about five-and-twenty years of age—came on board to make some purchases from my trade-room, and I had the distinguished honour of fitting on and selling to Queen Sé a yellow silk blouse and two pairs of patent leather shoes. His Majesty, who was a curious combination of piety and inborn wickedness, and spoke whaler's English with great facility, bought about 200 dollar's worth of prints and cutlery, and then proceeded to get drunk. He said that he was very glad the *Leonora* was taking all the white men away from Kusaie, as he was afraid of their Pleasant Island retinue killing him and all his people, and taking possession of the island.

By the time Queen Sé had finished and paid for her purchases her royal husband fell in a heap upon the cabin floor, and a number of twenty-dollar gold pieces, which he carried in a leather pouch at his waist, fell out and rolled all over the cabin. The Queen at once picked them up, and concealed them in the bosom of her dress, telling me with a smile that she would come on board again when we returned from Arrecifos, or as she called it, Ujilong, and spend them. Shortly afterward, her

women attendants carried his Majesty up on deck, and Hayes sent him ashore in one of our boats; and then, with our decks filled with the noisy, excitable Pleasant and Ocean Islanders, and the white traders rolling about among them in a state of noisy intoxication, we got under way, and, with our yards squared, ran down the coast within a cable length of the reef.

* * * * *

Three days later we were driven ashore in a fierce north-westerly gale and the trim little *Leonora* sank in Utwe Harbour in fourteen fathoms of water.

The story of the wreck of the *Leonora* in Utwe Harbour has been told by the writer in another work, so I will now merely describe some incidents of our stay on the island. First of all, however, let me make some brief mention of the island and its people. Kusaie is about thirty-five miles in circumference and of basaltic formation, and from the coast to the lofty summit of Mount Buache, 2,200 feet high, is clothed with the richest verdure imaginable. The northern part of the island rises precipitously from the sea, and has no outlying barrier reef, but from the centre the land trends westward and southward in a graceful slope towards the beautiful shores of Coquille Harbour. The southern portion is enclosed by a chain of palm-clad coral islets, connected at low water by reefs, forming a long, deep lagoon, the waters of which teem with fish and turtle. This lagoon was used as a means of communication between the village of Utwe Harbour, where the *Leonora* was wrecked, and the village at Coquille, and all day long one might see the red-painted



canoes of the natives passing to and fro over its glassy waters, which were, from their enclosed position, seldom ruffled by any wind, except during the rainy or westerly wind season. There were but three villages of any size on the island—that at Lelé, where the King and his principal chiefs lived, Utwe or Port Lottin, and Moüt or Leassé, on the shores of Coquille Harbour. At this latter place I lived most of the time during my stay on the island.

We were enabled to save a considerable amount of stores from the wreck, as well as some arms and ammunition. There were also a bull and two cows, which formed the remainder of a herd of cattle that Hayes had running on the island of Ponapé; the rest—some forty head or so—had been stolen from there by his one-time bosom friend and colleague, the notorious Captain Ben Peese.

The natives of Strong's Island were but few in number—about four hundred all told—and although a very handsome race and possessed of the very greatest intelligence, were dying out rapidly. In 1825, when Duperrey, the French navigator, visited the island he estimated the population at eleven thousand, and Don Felipe Tompson, an Englishman in the Spanish Navy, who was there long before Duperrey, relates that the houses of the people formed an almost continuous line around the southern and western coasts. The introduction of European diseases made terrible ravages among them in 1828, and then about the year 1856, when the whole of the population were converted by American missionaries and adopted European clothing, pulmonary disease

made its appearance and swept them away literally in hundreds.

Within a week after the loss of the brig Hayes and our passengers came to an agreement to build a town on the south shore of Utwe. They were to give Hayes the services of their native followers and help him to build dwelling-houses and store-houses for the manufacture of coco-nut oil. Hayes had accused—and with perfect truth—the Strong's Islanders of stealing a number of articles from the wreck, and demanded compensation from the King, who agreed to pay him an indemnity of a million coco-nuts. These were to be collected by our crew and the Ocean and Pleasant Islanders belonging to the traders. It was Hayes's intention to remain on the island till a passing sperm-whaler called there, and then charter her to take the ship's company and all the rest of the traders and natives to either Providence Island or Samoa.

In a month quite a town had been built, and a great sea wall of coral stones built to keep the sea from encroaching on the northern side. Standing apart from the rest of the houses was Captain Hayes's dwelling-house—an enormous structure, a hundred and fifty feet long and fifty wide. Here he ruled in state, and from his door watched his boats, manned by their savage crews, pulling to and fro on their mission of collecting coco-nuts. These, as soon as the boats touched the stone wharf he had built on the west side of the sea-wall, were carried up to the "Plaza" of the town, where they were quickly husked by women, who threw them to others to break open and



scrape the white flesh into a pulp. This was then placed in slanting troughs to rot and let the oil percolate down into casks placed at the lower end. On the other side of the "plaza" were the forge, carpenter's shop, and boat-builder's sheds, all of which bustled with activity, especially when the dreaded eye of the captain looked over toward them. Two hundred yards away was the Kusaiean village of Utwe, a collection of about twenty handsomely built houses, and all day long the pale olive-faced Kusaiean men and women would sit gazing in wondering fear at the fierce Pleasant Island women, who, clothed in short girdles of grass called "aireere," sang a savage chant as they husked the nuts. In front of Hayes's house was hung the *Leonora's* bell, and at noon and at six in the evening, when it was struck, the whole of the people who toiled at the oil-making and boat-building would hurry away with loud clamour for their meals. It was a truly exciting scene to witness, and were it not for the continual drunkenness of most of the white traders, who could be seen staggering about the "plaza" almost at any time, a pleasant one.

After a while, however, Hayes and the white traders began to quarrel, and dreadful bloodshed would have followed; for the Pleasant Islanders, who were all devotedly attached to their white masters and were all armed with Snider rifles and cutlasses, were eager for their white men to make an assault upon Hayes and the crew of the *Leonora*. One night they gathered in front of their houses and danced a war-dance, but their white leaders discreetly kept in the background when

Hayes appeared coming over toward them. He walked through the throng of natives, and in a very few minutes, although he was unarmed, picked out the biggest man of the lot and gave him a bad mauling about in the presence of every one in the village. One of the traders, a young American of thirty or so, named "Harry," at once declared that he was not going back on the captain, and would stand by him to the last, whereupon the others sullenly withdrew to their respective houses, and the trouble ended for the time.

This "Harry" was formerly a boat steerer on an American whaleship, from which he had deserted, and had been living on Pleasant Island for some years. He had four wives, whom he described as "the three Graces, with another chucked in," and though a rough, dare-devil fellow, he was, with the exception of old Harry Terry, the only one of the lot that was not a hopeless drunkard and ruffian. By one of his wives, a native of Sikaiana or Stewart's Island, he had two children, both girls. They were then about eight and ten years of age respectively, and were, I often thought, the loveliest specimens of childish beauty imaginable, and at the moment when their father stepped out from among the other traders and declared his intention of standing by Captain Hayes, each had a heavy navy revolver which their father had given them to carry in case he needed the weapons.

In the course of a month or so I had a serious disagreement with Captain Hayes over his treatment of a deputation of Strong's Islanders, and I left the settlement at Utwe, and removed to Leassé, the village at



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Coquille Harbour. The principal man in the place was a native named Kuis, with whom, and his wife Tulpe and daughter Kinié, I lived during the remainder of my stay on the island. And, although more than twenty-five years have passed and gone since then, I can never forget the kindness, warm-hearted hospitality, and amiability that filled their simple hearts to overflowing.



IV

WHEN Hayes and I quarrelled, the American trader, "Harry," who had hitherto stood by "Bully," sided with me, with the result that Hayes passionately declared that both of us were at the bottom of a conspiracy to lower his prestige and lessen his authority, not only with the other white men but with the natives as well. This was an utterly unfounded accusation, for we liked the man, but did not like the way in which he had treated the deputation of Strong's Islanders, who protested against his permitting the continual abduction of young Kusaiean girls by members of his crew.

I had brought the deputation to him, for Harry and myself were *personæ grata* with the natives, who all knew that Hayes had a great liking for us. But to my astonishment and indignation, "Bully" turned on me furiously, called me a meddlesome young fool, prefixing the "fool" with some very strong adjectives, and then, losing all control of himself, he sprang at one of the members of the deputation—the youngest and strongest—and lifting him up in his arms, literally forced the unfortunate young man out of the house—not by the



door, but through the side, tearing a hole in the thin lattice woodwork big enough to admit a bullock. The remainder of the deputation at once retired, and, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, "Bully" and myself parted, each deeply incensed.

Harry, who had a large following of wild, intractable Pleasant Islanders, all of whom were armed with Snider rifles, moved over to the opposite shore of Utwe Harbour with "the three Graces and the fourth chucked in," promising to come and see me at Leassé after he had "settled down a bit."

My reason for removing to Leassé was that I knew the place very well through frequent visits there, and Kuis, the head man or chief, had constantly pressed me to come there and live; so a few hours after my quarrel with Hayes I made a start, accompanied by two Strong's Islanders named Sru and Nana, both of whom came from Leassé, and were delighted that I was leaving Utwe to come to their own village.

They assured me that I was doing wisely in leaving the captain, that the people of Leassé would gladly receive me, and that I would find great pig-hunting and pigeon-shooting among the dense forests that lay at the back of the village.

Our way lay over the waters of a deep but winding lagoon, which from Utwe to Coquille Harbour is bounded on the ocean side by a chain of narrow, thickly wooded, and fertile islets, the haunt of myriads of sea-birds and giant robber crabs. This chain of islets lay on our left hand; on our right the steep, forest-clad mountains of Strong's Island rose abruptly from the still waters of

the lagoon. The lagoon itself averaged about a mile in width, and here and there, dotted upon its placid, glassy surface, were tiny isolated islets of perhaps not more than an acre in extent, but covered with a dense mass of the loveliest verdure imaginable, from the centre of which rose a group of half a dozen or so of stately coco-nut palms. Each islet was encircled by a snow-white beach, descending abruptly to the water, the great depth of which enabled us to paddle within a foot or so of the shore.

We had left Utwe just after daylight, and though the trade-wind was blowing freshly outside and we could hear the thunder of the ocean rollers pounding on the outside reef beyond the encircling chain of islets half a mile away, scarcely the faintest breath of air disturbed the blue depths of the lagoon. The canoe was light and our three paddles sent her over the waters at a great rate. My two companions were both young men, and, unlike most of the people of Strong's Island, who are a reserved and melancholy race, they laughed and sang merrily to the strokes of their red-stained paddles.

Here and there, as we skimmed along the shore of the forest-clad mountains of the mainland, we would pass a village of six or seven houses, and the small-made, light-complexioned folk would, as they heard the sound of our voices, come out and eagerly beseech us to come in "and eat and rest awhile."

But pleased as I would have been to have landed and accepted their hospitality—for I was known to every native on the island—my crew urged me not to delay so early on our journey. Sometimes, however, these



kindly-hearted people would not be denied, and boys and girls would run parallel to our canoe along the beach and implore Sru and Nana and the "white man" to stay "just a little, just a very, very little time, and tell them the news from Utwe."

And then, as we rested on our paddles and talked, under pretence of getting closer to us they would dash into the water and seizing the gunwales of the canoe laughingly insist upon our coming ashore and entering their cool houses, and indeed it was hard to resist their blandishments. Then, once we were inside, they would tell us that they would not let us go till we had eaten and drunk a little.

A little! Basket after basket of cooked fish, crayfish, pigeons, baked pork, bunches of bananas and kits of oranges and heaps of luscious pineapples would be placed before us, and they seemed absolutely pained at my inability to eat more than a few mouthfuls. All the men at these isolated villages were away at Leassé or elsewhere in the vicinity of Coquille Harbour, and the women and young girls pretended to be very much frightened at being left by themselves for a couple of days. They were afraid, they said, that Captain Hayes's wild Pleasant Island natives might come up the lagoon and harry their villages—wouldn't we stay with them till their husbands and brothers came back?

Now, we knew all this was nonsense. There was no fear of the Pleasant Islanders' boats coming up the lagoon to these little villages when there was richer prey nearer at hand, so we only laughed. Many of the young boys and girls were of great personal beauty, and,

indeed, so were many of the young unmarried women, but their light skins were stained and disfigured by the application of turmeric. At one of these places our pretty tormentors played us a trick. While we were in a house and having kava prepared in the Micronesian fashion, by pounding the green root into a hollowed stone, the girls carried our canoe up bodily from the beach and hid it in a clump of breadfruit trees about two hundred yards away. When we bade goodbye to the elder women, who had given us the kava, and walked down to the beach the canoe was gone.

"Here, you girls," said Nana, "where is our canoe? Don't play these foolish tricks; the white man must get to Leassé before darkness sets in."

But the imps only laughed at us, and for some minutes we had a great game with them, chasing them about. At last we tired of this, and, lighting our pipes, sat down to smoke under a great banyan, whose branches reached far out over the white beaches. One of the children, a merry-eyed girl of ten, with long hair that almost touched her knees, was a bit of a humorist, and told us that we might as well stay for the night, as the canoe was gone for ever.

"Where to?" we asked.

"Up there," she answered, with the gravest countenance imaginable, pointing skyward. "A big kanapu (fish eagle) was soaring overhead, and suddenly swooped down and seized it in his claws and flew away into the blue with it."

At last, however, they came back, carrying the canoe among them, and with much laughter dropped it into



the water. Then they filled it with as many young drinking coco-nuts and as much fruit as we could stow, and bade us farewell, running along the beach with us till a high, steep bluff shut them off from following us any further.

By and by, as we paddled along, the sun began to get pretty hot, and we kept in as close as possible under the shade of the steep shores of the mainland. Overhead was a sky of matchless, cloudless blue, and sailing to and fro on motionless wing were numbers of tropic birds, their long scarlet retrices showing in startling contrast to their snow-white body plumage. All round about us turtle would rise every now and then, and taking a look at us, sink out of sight again. From the dense mountain forest, that earlier in the morning had resounded with the heavy booming note of the great grey pigeons and the cooing note of the little purple doves, not a sound now came forth, for the birds were roosting in the shade from the heat of the sun. Half a mile or so away, through a break in the chain of low islets, we could see the tumbling blue of the ocean, and over the tree-tops the white spume of the breakers as they leapt upon the iron-bound coast.

We made fast our canoe to a jutting point of rock and rested awhile and smoked. The tide was on the flow, and as the water came swirling and eddying in from the great passage in the reef five miles away, there came with it countless thousands of fish of the mullet species, seeking their food among the mangrove creeks and flats that lay behind us. They did not swim in an orderly, methodical fashion, but leapt and spun and danced about

as if thrown up out of the water by some invisible power beneath. Sometimes they would rise simultaneously, thousands at a time, and, taking a leap, descend again with an extraordinary noise. Then, quick as lightning, they would make three or four such leaps in succession with the regularity and precision of machinery. Hovering and fluttering above them on tireless wing were numbers of sea-birds, which ever and again darted down amongst them and rose with hoarse, triumphant note, prey in mouth.

We lay resting quietly till the incoming tide had spent its strength, and then once more pushed out into the transparent depths of the lagoon. Right ahead of us, after another hour's paddling, lay a long, gleaming point of sand covered with a grove of palms; beyond that a wide sweep of pale green shallow water; beyond that again the wild tumble and fret of the surf on the barrier reef.

Laying down our paddles—for we were now in shallow water—we took up our three long canoe poles, and striking them on the hard, sandy bottom in unison we sent the canoe spinning round to the point, and as we rounded it there lay before us the brown roofs of the village of Leassé nestling under the shade of its groves. This was, as I have said, to be my home for many long but happy months.



V

THE moment we came in sight of the village, Nana, the native who was for'ard, stood up and gave a loud cry, which was immediately answered by some invisible person near us; and then the cry was taken up by some one else nearer the village. In a few minutes we saw the people coming out of their queer-looking, saddle-backed dwellings and running down to the beach, where, by the time we shot the canoe up on the sand, the whole population was gathered to welcome us.

Standing a little in front of the rest of the villagers was the head man, swarthy-faced, clean-shaved Kuis; beside him Tulpe, his wife, a graceful young woman of about five-and-twenty, and her husband's little daughter by a former wife. This child was named Kinié, a merry-faced, laughing-voiced sprite, ten years of age, with long, wavy, and somewhat unkempt hair hanging down over her shining copper-coloured shoulders.

Kuis spoke English well, and the moment I got out of the canoe he shook hands with me, his wife and daughter following suit, and said he was glad that I had left the settlement at Utwe; that King Togusā and Queen Sé had sent him word that I intended leaving

the other white men, and that if I came to Leassé or any other village on the lee side of the island I was to be well cared for; "but," he added, "you an' me will talk 'bout this by and by. Come first to my house, and eat and smoke."

Here an old man, renowned as a great wild boar hunter, thrust himself through the surrounding crowd, and asked my name. His keen, wrinkled visage was all but enshrouded by a mass of snowy-white hair that made him present a very curious appearance—much like that of a Poland fowl. He shook hands with me vigorously, and then made a speech to the others, pointing his finger alternately at myself and then to his own breast. Knowing but little of the difficult Strong's Island language, I was at first under the impression that the old man was not pleased at the advent of a white man; but I was soon pleasantly undeceived, for at the conclusion of his speech every man, woman, and child came up in turn and solemnly shook hands with me.

Motioning to Sru and Nana—my crew—to hand my few little effects, which consisted of clothing, tobacco, and a Winchester rifle and ammunition, out of the canoe, the whole party of us started off for Kuis's house, the old pig-hunter proudly carrying the Winchester in advance, and Kuis and his wife each holding one of my hands.

Not one of them now spoke a word, and only that it would have given serious offence, the temptation to laugh at being led about like a child was very great. In another minute or two we reached the head man's




house, a handsome, well-built structure of coral stone, with a thatched roof and cane-work floor raised some two feet or so off the ground. Here all the males in the company sat down to eat, while the women waited upon them.

In the whole village there were but a hundred people, and, with the exception of two or three young men who were away turtle-catching, they were now all present. After we had finished eating, Kuis repeated the King's message to me, and wanted to know what I intended to do—to live at Leassé, or "go and look at the other places along the coast, and see if there was a better place than Leassé?"

Leassé, I said, should be my home. I knew him and some others besides in Leassé, and liked the place and the people, etcetera. They appeared very pleased at this, and Kuis at once desired me to point out the spot whereon my house was to be built—meanwhile I was to live with him till it was completed. I chose a site about thirty yards away from where we stood; and then, to show that no time would be lost, Kuis at once sent five or six men into the bush to cut posts, and ordered all the women and girls to begin making the thatch for the roof and cutting cane for the walls and floor.

I must ask my readers to bear in mind that the friendship of these people for an almost unknown white man was inspired by no unworthy motive. Kuis and his people, as well as the King and Queen, knew that when the brig was lost I had saved nothing whatever from the wreck. Such little clothing as I had with me



had been given to me by the young American trader before mentioned, and old Harry Terry had given me half a small tierce of tobacco and the Winchester rifle and cartridges. And shortly after the wreck of the brig it had been my fortunate lot to prevent a number of Strong's Islanders from serious ill-treatment by some of my white companions, and for this their gratitude knew no bounds. I found that the old King, as soon as he heard that young Harry and myself had separated from the other white men, had sent messengers to every place on the island telling them to treat us well. He was, however, terribly afraid of Harry's Pleasant Island natives, and anxious that he should keep them under control and disarm them. I told Kuis that the King had no reason to fear any harm coming to his people from Harry's followers, who would be kept well in hand by their master, furthermore that I had heard Harry threaten to shoot dead the first man that either robbed or offered violence to any Strong's Islander. They seemed much pleased at this, and told me that in the old days they were afraid of no one, and were a great fighting people, but since their conversion to Christianity all the fight had gone out of them; and, indeed, I found them, although a generous and amiable race, very cowardly.

During the time my house was being built I made friends with every boy and girl in the village; they took an especial delight in taking me about shooting and fishing. At the rear of Leassé the forest-clad mountains rise in a gradual but magnificent sweep to a height of two thousand feet, and on the second day after



my arrival we set out to try and shoot some wild pigs, with which the dense mountain jungle abounded. The only adult beside myself with the party was the old boar hunter Rii. He was armed with a very heavy wooden spear, with a keen steel head, shaped like a whaler's lance, whilst the rest of the party, who were composed of boys and girls ranging in years from ten to fifteen, carried lighter spears. Every girl had two or three mongrel curs held in a leash. These animals were, however, well trained in pig-hunting and never barked until the prey was either being run down or was brought to bay. Amongst the children were two half-castes—brother and sister. The boy was about twelve, the girl a couple of years older. I learnt that their father, who was dead, was an Englishman, a deserter from a man-of-war. He had married a girl at Coquille Harbour, and, after living on Strong's Island for a few years, had gone with his wife and children to the Western Carolines, where he was killed in an attack on a native fortress, and the woman and boy and girl had returned to their native land in a whaleship. The girl spoke English very well, and although she was naked to the waist when we first started out, a feeling of modesty made her return to the village and don a man's singlet. Old Rii, our leader, who could not speak a word of English, called the pair up to me, and, pointing to the boy, said "Te-o" (Joe), and to the girl, "Lit-si" (Lizzie). Although they were much lighter in colour than the rest of our company, I had no idea they had white blood in their veins till the girl said shyly, "This is my brother; my father belong to England." I

afterwards found from her that she only knew her father as "Bob"—his surname was never known.

For the first mile or two we walked along the banks of a noisy mountain stream, which here and there formed into deep pools, with a bottom of bright blue stones. These pools contained many fish, as well as vast numbers of crayfish. One of the girls with us carried fishing-tackle, and in a few minutes some rods were cut, the hooks baited with small crayfish, and several fine fish landed. These were at once cooked, the fires being kindled on some large, flat basalt stones, which were lying scattered about on the bank. On inquiring how these stones came to be there, I was told by "Lizzie" that they were the remains of an old wall that once enclosed one of the ancient villages. Afterwards we came across many similar sites, which seemed to bear out the statements of Duperrey and other navigators, that Strong's Island was once inhabited by over twenty thousand people. At the present time the population does not reach five hundred. One of these places was situated on the summit of a spur of the great mountain range that traverses the island. The top of the mountain had been levelled as flat as a table, and a space of about an acre was covered with what appeared to be a floor of huge basaltic prisms, laid closely together. What the purpose of such gigantic labour was none of my companions had any idea, and on my inquiring from Lizzie how these stones, many of which weighed several tons, were carried to such an extraordinary height up such a steep ascent, she shook her head, and said, "You ask Rii. He is a very



old man, and not a Christian, and knows all about the old times. But please don' ask me. The missionaries don' let us talk of the bad days (*i.e.*, heathen times).'' This put an end to all inquiry on my part, as old Rii could not speak a word of English, save a few vigorous expressions he had acquired from whale-ships and which he was very fond of using, and I was only just learning the Kusaie language.

As we travelled up along the sides of the mountain we saw numbers of large, fat pigeons. They seemed to feel no alarm whatever at our presence. Their note, which is very deep and resonant, filled the air with strange, weird echoes that reverberated amongst the silence of the mountain forest. On reaching a little plateau on the side of a spur, old Rii stopped, and beckoned to us to keep silence, at the same time sending all the boys below the plateau. Peering cautiously through the jungle, we saw, lying down on the moss-covered ground at the butt of a tree, a sow with her litter. We lay very quiet till the boys had formed a cordon at the lower edge of the plateau, so as to cut off escape in that direction, and then Rii whispered to me to shoot the sow in the belly, but not to hit any of her litter if I could help it, as we could easily take them alive with the dogs. Just as I was about to fire the old sow raised her head, and I fired at her shoulder. At the same moment our twenty curs were let go, and the sow, although the bullet had smashed her shoulder, at once tore down the plateau, followed by her progeny, but catching sight of the cordon of boys below, at once turned, and, injured

as she was, made up towards the summit of the mountain with incredible speed. Then began the fun, the dogs yelping and howling, and the boys and girls screaming with excitement, as they plunged through the undergrowth and vines in pursuit. Nearly on the summit was a huge tree, with foliage like an Australian white cedar, and here was the old pig's lair, for the soil at its buttressed foot was scooped out into deep holes.

When we had succeeded in gaining the top the dogs were running round and round the tree, making the most horrible din imaginable, but not daring to venture into the hole where the old sow was. Suddenly we saw a huge black head, with two great curved tusks, protrude out of one of the dark recesses, and the next instant a great black boar burst out and charged at the dogs, followed by the wounded sow and five little black-and-yellow suckers. Old as he was, Rii showed his prowess, for, calling out to the boys and girls to see that none of the young pigs got down the spur, he advanced spear in hand towards the boar, which, after his first charge, had backed up to the tree again, and now stood surrounded by dogs and frothing his savage jaws. Already he had two or three light spears sticking into his stomach and rump.

Followed by a couple of girls who carried baskets of wood ashes, old Rii got to within a dozen feet of the great brute, and, taking a basket of ashes, threw it at the boar. It struck him fair in the face, and the contents smothered his head and forequarters, blinding him for a second or two; and then, at the same moment, Rii sprang forward and plunged his heavy spear deep



into the creature's bowels. But even then the boar was game, and, with a terrific snort of rage, made another charge, only to meet half a dozen spear-thrusts.

A bullet through his head soon finished him, and then began the chase after the young suckers, every one of which was caught. Small as they were, they fought and snapped and bit viciously, and acted generally like little fiends. As for the old sow, she was killed by the dogs; she was very poor and mangy, but the suckers were as round as balls.

Slinging the huge carcass of the boar from a stout pole, we returned to the village at nightfall. On the way down my two young half-caste friends told me that it is a habit peculiar to the wild sows of Strong's Island, when rearing their young, to flee to the lair of the boar when alarmed, and that sometimes the boar will kill every one of her young when harassed by dogs, and then, bursting through them, leave his partner to her fate.

* * * * *

Month after month passed away in the quiet little village of Leassé without the writer seeing anything of his former shipmates in the *Leonora*. Sometimes Hayes's boats would come to within a mile or so of the entrance to Coquille Harbour in their quests for coco-nuts, but, fortunately for the peace of the villagers, their crews never ventured so far as the village itself. Perhaps, indeed, they did not know where it was, for the high-peaked, saddle-backed houses were embowered in a thick grove of breadfruit and durian-trees about half a mile from the beach; and only the white curling

smoke arising from the fires as the women cooked the morning and evening meals would have revealed its presence.

One peaceful, monotonously happy day followed another till at last, in the first flush of one bright tropic sunrise, a stately British man-of-war rounded the north end of the island, and furling her snow-white canvas—for she made the land under sail—steamed into Lelé Harbour. And the next day Hayes fled from the island in an open boat, and I, with three others of the *Leonora's* company, saw from the decks of the corvette the blue peaks of Kusaie sink into the sea.



*AMONA ; THE CHILD ; AND THE
BEAST*

AMONA was, as his master so frequently told him—accentuating the remark with a blow or a kick—only “a miserable kanaka.” Of his miserableness there was no doubt, for Denison, who lived in the same house as he did, was a daily witness of it—and his happiness. Also, he was a kanaka—a native of Niué, in the South Pacific ; Savage Island it is called by the traders and is named on the charts, though its five thousand sturdy, brown-skinned inhabitants have been civilised, Christianised, and have lived fairly cleanly for the past thirty years.

Amona and Denison had the distinction of being employed by Armitage, one of the most unmitigated blackguards in the Pacific. He was a shipowner, planter, merchant, and speculator ; was looked upon by a good many people as “not a bad sort of a fellow, you know—and the soul of hospitality.” In addition, he was an incorrigible drunken bully, and broke his wife’s heart within four years after she married him.

Amona was his cook. Denison was one of his super-

cargoes, and (when a long bout of drunkenness made him see weird visions of impossible creatures) manager of the business on shore, overseer, accountant, and Jack-of-all-trades. How he managed to stay on with such a brute I don't know. He certainly paid him well enough, but he (Denison) could have got another berth from other people in Samoa, Fiji, or Tonga had he wanted it. And, although Armitage was always painfully civil to Denison—who tried to keep his business from going to the dogs—the man hated him as much as he despised Āmona, and would have liked to have kicked him, as he would have liked to have kicked or strangled any one who knew the secret of his wife's death and his child's lameness. And three people in Samoa did know it—Āmona, the Niué cook, Dr. Eckhardt, and Denison. Armitage has been dead now these five-and-twenty years—died, as he deserved to die, alone and friendless in an Australian bush hospital out in the God-forsaken Never-Never country, and when Denison heard of his death, he looked at the gentle wife's dim, faded photograph, and wondered if the Beast saw her sweet, sad face in his dying moments. He trusted not; for in her eyes would have shown only the holy light of love and forgiveness—things which a man like Armitage could not have understood—even then.

She had been married three years when she came with him to Samoa to live on Solo-Solo Plantation, in a great white-painted bungalow, standing amid a grove of breadfruit and coco-palms, and overlooking the sea to the north, east, and west; to the south was the dark green of the mountain-forest.



"Oh! I think it is the fairest, sweetest picture in the world," she said to Denison the first time he met her. She was sitting on the verandah with her son in her lap, and as she spoke she pressed her lips to his soft little cheek and caressed the tiny hands. "So different from where I was born and lived all my life—on the dull, sun-baked plains of the Riverina—isn't it, my pet?"

"I am glad that you like the place, Mrs. Armitage," the supercargo said as he looked at the young, girlish face and thought that she, too, with her baby, made a fair, sweet picture. How she loved the child! And how the soft, grey-blue eyes would lose their sadness when the little one turned its face up to hers and smiled! How came it, he wondered, that such a tender, flower-like woman was mated to such a man as Armitage!

Long after she was dead, Denison heard the story—one common enough. Her father, whose station adjoined that of Armitage, got into financial difficulties, went to Armitage for help, and practically sold his daughter to the Beast for a couple of thousand pounds. Very likely such a man would have sold his daughter's mother as well if he wanted money.

* * * * *

As they sat talking, Armitage rode up, half-drunk as usual. He was a big man, good-looking.

"Hallo, Nell! Pawing the damned kid as usual! Why the hell don't you let one of the girls take the little animal and let him tumble about on the grass? You're spoiling the child—by God, you are."

“ Ah, he’s so happy, Fred, here with me, and——”

“ Happy be damned—you’re always letting him maul you about. I want a whisky-and-soda, and so does Denison—don’t you?” And then the Beast, as soon as his wife with the child in her arms had left the room, began to tell his subordinate of a “new” girl he had met that morning in Joe D’Acosta’s saloon.

“ Oh, shut up, man. Your wife is in the next room.”

“ Let her hear—and be damned to her! She knows what I do. I don’t disguise anything from her. I’m not a sneak in that way. By God, I’m not the man to lose any fun from sentimental reasons. Have you seen this new girl at Joe’s? She’s a Manhiki half-caste. God, man! She’s glorious, simply glorious!”

“ You mean Laea, I suppose. She’s a common beacher—sailor man’s trull. Surely you wouldn’t be seen ever speaking to *her*?”

“ Wouldn’t I! You don’t know me yet! I like the girl, and I’ve fixed things up with her. She’s coming here as my nursemaid—twenty dollars a month! What do you think of that?”

“ You would not insult your wife so horribly!”

He looked at Denison sullenly, but made no answer, as the supercargo went on:

“ You’ll get the dead cut from every white man in Samoa. Not a soul will put foot inside your store door, and Joe D’Acosta himself would refuse to sell you a drink! Might as well shoot yourself at once.”

“ Oh, well, damn it all, don’t keep on preaching. I—I was more in fun than anything else. Ha! Here’s



Āmona with the drinks. Why don't you be a bit smarter, you damned frizzy-haired man-eater?"

Āmona's sallow face flushed deeply, but he made no reply to the insult as he handed a glass to his master.

"Put the tray down there, confound you! Don't stand there like a blarsted mummy; clear out till we want you again."

The native made no answer, bent his head in silence, and stepped quietly away. Then Armitage began to grumble at him as a "useless swine."

"Why," said Denison, "Mrs. Armitage was only just telling me that he's worth all the rest of the servants put together. And, by Jove, he *is* fond of your youngster—simply worships the little chap."

Armitage snorted, and turned his lips down. Ten minutes later, he was asleep in his chair.

* * * * *

Nearly six months had passed—six months of wretchedness to the young wife, whose heart was slowly breaking under the strain of living with the Beast. Such happiness as was hers lay in the companionship of her little son, and every evening Tom Denison would see her watching the child and the patient, faithful Āmona, as the two played together on the smooth lawn in front of the sitting-room, or ran races in and out among the mango-trees. She was becoming paler and thinner every day—the Beast was getting fatter and coarser, and more brutalised. Sometimes he would remain in Apia for a week, returning home either boisterously drunk or sullen and scowling-faced. In the latter case, he would come

into the office where Denison worked (he had left the schooner of which he was supercargo, and was now "overseering" Solo-Solo) and try to grasp the muddled condition of his financial affairs. Then, with much variegated language, he would stride away, cursing the servants and the place and everything in general, mount his horse, and ride off again to the society of the loafers, gamblers, and flaunting unfortunates who haunted the drinking saloons of Apia and Matafêle.

One day came a crisis. Denison was rigging a tackle to haul a tree-trunk into position in the plantation saw-pit, when Armitage rode up to the house. He dismounted and went inside. Five minutes later Āmona came staggering down the path to him. His left cheek was cut to the bone by a blow from Armitage's fist. Denison brought him into his own room, stitched up the wound, and gave him a glass of grog, and told him to light his pipe and rest.

"Āmona, you're a *valea* (fool). Why don't you leave this place? This man will kill you some day. How many beatings has he given you?" He spoke in English.

"I know not how many. But it is God's will. And if the master some day killeth me, it is well. And yet, but for some things, I would use my knife on him."

"What things?"

He came over to the supercargo, and, seating himself cross-legged on the floor, placed his firm, brown, right hand on the white man's knee.



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“For two things, good friend. The little fingers of the child are clasped tightly around my heart, and when his father striketh me and calls me a filthy man-eater, a dog, and a pig, I know no pain. That is one thing. And the other thing is this—the child’s mother hath come to me when my body hath ached from the father’s blows, and the blood hath covered my face; and she hath bound up my wounds and wept silent tears, and together have we knelt and called upon God to turn his heart from the grog and the foul women, and to take away from her and the child the bitterness of these things.”

“You’re a good fellow, Āmona,” said Denison, as he saw that the man’s cheeks were wet with tears.

“Nay, for sometimes my heart is bitter with anger. But God is good to me. For the child loveth me. And the mother is of God . . . aye, and she will be with Him soon.” Then he rose to his knees suddenly, and looked wistfully at the supercargo, as he put his hand on his. “She will be dead before the next moon is *ai aiga* (in the first quarter), for at night I lie outside her door, and but three nights ago she cried out to me: ‘Come, Āmona, Come!’ And I went in, and she was sitting up on her bed and blood was running from her mouth. But she bade me tell no one—not even thee. And it was then she told me that death was near to her, for she hath a disease whose roots lie in her chest, and which eateth away her strength. Dear friend, let me tell thee of some things . . . This man is a devil. . . . I know he but desires to see her die. He hath cursed her before me, and twice have I seen him

take the child from her arms, and, setting him on the floor to weep in terror, take his wife by the hand——”

“Stop, man; stop! That’ll do. Say no more! The beast!”

“*E tonu, e tonu* (true, true),” said the man, quietly, and still speaking in Samoan. “He is as a beast of the mountains, as a tiger of the country India, which devoureth the lamb and the kid. . . . And so now I have opened my heart to thee of these things——”

A native woman rushed into the room: “Come, Āmona, come. *Misi Fafine* (the mistress) bleeds from her mouth again.”

The white man and the brown ran into the front sitting-room together, just as they heard a piercing shriek of terror from the child; then came the sound of a heavy fall.

As they entered, Armitage strode out, jolting against them as he passed. His face was swollen and ugly with passion—bad to look at.

“Go and pick up the child, you frizzy-haired pig!” he muttered hoarsely to Āmona as he passed. “He fell off his mother’s lap.”

Mrs. Armitage was leaning back in her chair, as white as death, and trying to speak, as with one hand she tried to stanch the rush of blood from her mouth, and with the other pointed to her child, who was lying on his face under a table, motionless and unconscious.

In less than ten minutes, a native was galloping through the bush to Apia for Dr. Eckhardt. Denison had picked up the child, who, as he came to, began to



cry. Assuring his mother that he was not much hurt, he brought him to her, and sat beside the lounge on which she lay, holding him in his arms. He was a good little man, and did not try to talk to her when the supercargo whispered to him to keep silent, but lay stroking the poor mother's thin white hand. Yet every now and then, as he moved or Denison changed his position, he would utter a cry of pain and say his leg pained him.

Four hours later the German doctor arrived. Mrs. Armitage was asleep; so Eckhardt would not awaken her at the time. The boy, however, had slept but fitfully, and every now and then awakened with a sob of pain. The nurse stripped him, and Eckhardt soon found out what was wrong—a serious injury to the left hip.

Late in the evening, as the big yellow-bearded German doctor and Denison sat in the dining room smoking and talking, Taloi, the child's nurse entered, and was followed by Amona, and the woman told them the whole story.

“*Misi Fafine* was sitting in a chair with the boy on her lap when the master came in. His eyes were black and fierce with anger, and, stepping up, he seized the child by the arm, and bade him get down. Then the little one screamed in terror, and *Misi Fafine* screamed too, and the master became as mad, for he tore the boy from his mother's arms, and tossed him across the room against the wall. That is all I know of this thing.”

Denison saw nothing of Armitage till six o'clock on the following morning, just as Eckhardt was going away. He put out his hand. Eckhardt put his own behind his

back, and, in a few blunt words, told the Beast what he thought of him.

“And if this was a civilised country,” he added crisply, “you would be now in gaol. Yes, in prison. You have as good as killed your wife by your brutality—she will not live another two months. You have so injured your child’s hip that he may be a cripple for life. You are a damned scoundrel, no better than the lowest ruffian of a city slum, and if you show yourself in Joe D’Acosta’s smoking-room again, you’ll find more than half a dozen men—Englishmen, Americans and Germans—ready to kick you out into the *au ala*” (road).

Armitage was no coward. He sprang forward with an oath, but Denison, who was a third less of his employer’s weight, deftly put out his right foot and the master of Solo Solo plantation went down. Then the supercargo sat on him and, having a fine command of seafaring expletives, threatened to gouge his eyes out if he did not keep quiet.

“You go on, doctor,” he said cheerfully. “I’ll let you know in the course of an hour or two how Mrs. Armitage and the boy are progressing. The seat which I am now occupying, though not a very honourable one, considering the material of which it is composed, is very comfortable for the time being; and”—he turned and glared savagely at Armitage’s purpled face—“You sweep! I have a great inclination to let Eckhardt come and boot the life out of you whilst I hold you down, you brute!”

“I’ll kill you for this,” said Armitage hoarsely.

“Won’t give you the chance, my boy. And if you



don't promise to go to your room quietly, I'll call in the native servants, sling you up like the pig you are to a pole, and have you carried into Apia, where you stand a good show of being lynched. I've had enough of you. Every one—except your blackguardly acquaintances in Matafele—would be glad to hear that you were dead, and your wife and child freed from you."

Eckhardt stepped forward. "Let him up, Mr. Denison."

The supercargo obeyed the request.

"Just as you please, doctor. But I think that he ought to be put in irons, or a strait-jacket, or knocked on the head as a useless beast. If it were not for Mrs. Armitage and her little son, I would like to kill the sweep. His treatment of that poor fellow Āmona, who is so devoted to the child, has been most atrocious."

Eckhardt grasped the supercargo's hand as Armitage shambled off. "He's a brute, as you say, Mr. Denison. But she has some affection for him. For myself, I would like to put a bullet through him."

Within three months Mrs. Armitage was dead, and a fresh martyrdom began for poor Āmona. But he and the child had plenty of good friends; and then, one day, when Armitage awakened to sanity after a long drinking bout, he found that both Āmona and the child had gone.

Nearly a score of years later Denison met them in an Australian city. The "baby" had grown to be a well-set-up young fellow, and Āmona the faithful was still with him—Āmona with a smiling, happy face. They came down on board Denison's vessel with him, and "the baby" gave him, ere they parted, that faded photograph of his dead mother.





THE SNAKE AND THE BELL

WHEN I was a child of eight years of age, a curious incident occurred in the house in which our family lived. The locality was Mosman's Bay, one of the many picturesque indentations of the beautiful harbour of Sydney. In those days the houses were few and far apart, and our own dwelling was surrounded on all sides by the usual monotonous-hued Australian forest of iron barks and spotted gums, traversed here and there by tracks seldom used, as the house was far back from the main road, leading from the suburb of St. Leonards to Middle Harbour. The building itself was in the form of a quadrangle enclosing a courtyard, on to which nearly all the rooms opened; each room having a bell over the door, the wires running all round the square, while the front-door bell, which was an extra large affair, hung in the hall, the "pull" being one of the old-fashioned kind, an iron sliding-rod suspended from the outer wall plate, where it connected with the wire.

One cold and windy evening about eight o'clock, my mother, my sisters, and myself were sitting in the dining-room awaiting the arrival of my brothers from Sydney—they attended school there, and rowed or sailed the six

miles to and fro every day, generally returning home by dusk. On this particular evening, however, they were late, on account of the wind blowing rather freshly from the north-east; but presently we heard the front-door bell ring gently.

“Here they are at last,” said my mother; “but how silly of them to go to the front door on such a windy night, tormenting boys!”

Julia, the servant, candle in hand, went along the lengthy passage, and opened the door. No one was there! She came back to the dining-room smiling—“Masther Edward is ather playin’ wan av his thricks, ma’am——” she began, when the bell again rang—this time vigorously. My eldest sister threw down the book she was reading, and with an impatient exclamation herself went to the door, opened it quickly, and said sharply as she pulled it inwards—

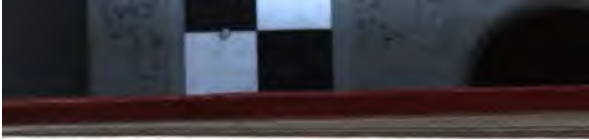
“Come in at once, you stupid things!” There was no answer, and she stepped outside on the verandah. No one was visible, and again the big bell in the hall rang!

She shut the door angrily and returned to her seat, just as the bell gave a curious, faint tinkle as if the tongue had been moved ever so gently.

“Don’t take any notice of them,” said my mother, “they will soon get tired of playing such silly pranks, and be eager for their supper.”

Presently the bell gave out three clear strokes. We looked at each other and smiled. Five minutes passed, and then came eight or ten gentle strokes in quick succession.

“Let us catch them,” said my mother, rising, and



holding her finger up to us to preserve silence, as she stepped softly along the hall, we following on tiptoe.

Softly turning the handle, she suddenly threw the door wide open, just as the bell gave another jangle. Not a soul was visible!

My mother—one of the most placid-tempered women who ever breathed, now became annoyed, and stepping out on the verandah, addressed herself to the darkness—

“Come inside at once, boys, or I shall be very angry. I know perfectly well what you have done; you have tied a string to the bell wires, and are pulling it. If you don’t desist you shall have no supper.”

No answer—except from the hall bell, which gave another half-hearted tinkle.

“Bring a candle and the step-ladder, Julia,” said our now thoroughly exasperated parent, “and we shall see what these foolish boys have done to the bell-wire.”

Julia brought the ladder; my eldest sister mounted it, and began to examine the bell. She could see nothing unusual, no string or wire, and as she descended, the bell swayed and gave one faint stroke!

We all returned to the sitting room, and had scarcely been there five minutes when we heard my three brothers coming in, in their usual way, by the back door. They tramped into the sitting room, noisy, dirty, wet with spray, and hungry, and demanded supper in a loud and collected voice. My mother looked at them with a severe aspect, and said they deserved none.

“Why, mum, what’s the matter?” said Ted; “what *have* we been doing now, or what have we not done, that we don’t deserve any supper, after pulling for two

hours from Circular Quay, against a howling, black north-easter?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean. It is most inconsiderate of you to play such silly tricks upon us."

Ted gazed at her in genuine astonishment. "Silly tricks, mother! What silly tricks?" (Julia crossed herself, and trembled visibly as the bell again rang.)

My mother, at once satisfied that Ted and my other brothers really knew nothing of the mysterious bell-ringing, quickly explained the cause of her anger.

"Let us go and see if we can find out," said Ted. "You two boys, and you, Julia, get all the stable lanterns, light them, and we'll start out together—two on one side of the house and two on the other. Some one must be up to a trick!"

Julia, who was a huge, raw-boned Irish girl, as strong as a working bullock, but not so graceful, again crossed herself, and began to weep.

"What's the matter with you?" said Ted angrily.

"Shure, an' there was tirrible murders committed here in the ould convict days," she whimpered. "The polace sargint's wife at Sint Leonards tould me all about it. There was three souldiers murdered down beyant on the beach, by some convicts, whin they was atin' their supper, an' there's people near about now that saw all the blood and——"

"Stop it, you great lumbering idiot!" shouted Ted, as my eldest sister began to laugh hysterically, and the youngest, made a terrified dart to mother's skirts.

Ted's angry voice and threatening visage silenced



Julia for the moment, and she tremblingly went towards the door to obey his orders when the bell gave out such a vigorous and sustained peal that she sank down in a colossal heap on the floor, and then went into violent hysterics. (I assure my readers that I am not exaggerating matters in the slightest.)

My mother, who was a thoroughly sensible woman, pushed the whole brood of us out of the room, came after us, shut the door and locked it. *She* knew the proper treatment for hysterics.

“Let her stay there, boys,” she said quietly, “she will hurt the furniture more than herself, the ridiculous creature. Now, Ted, you and your brothers get the lanterns, and the little ones and myself will go into the kitchen.”

We ran out into the stables, lit three lanterns, and my next eldest brother and myself, feeling horribly frightened, but impelled to show some courage by Ted’s awful threats of what he would do to us if we “funked,” told us to go round the house, beginning from the left, and meet him at the hall door, he going round from the right.

With shaking limbs and gasping breath we made our portion of the circuit, sticking close to each other, and carefully avoiding looking at anything as we hurried over the lawn, our only anxiety being to meet Ted as quickly as possible and then get inside again. We arrived on the verandah, and in front of the hall-door, quite five minutes before Ted appeared.

“Well, did you see anything?” he asked, as he walked up the steps, lantern in hand.

"Nothing," we answered, edging up towards the door.

Ted looked at us contemptuously. "You miserable little curs! What are you so frightened of? You're no better than a pack of women and kids. It's the wind that has made the bell ring, or, if it's not the wind, it is something else which I don't know anything about; but I want my supper. Pull the bell, one of you."

Elated at so soon escaping from the horrors of the night, we seized the handle of the bell-pull, and gave it a vigorous tug.

"It's stuck, Ted. It won't pull down," we said.

"Granny!" said the big brother, "you're too funky to give it a proper pull," and pushing us aside, he grasped the pendant handle and gave a sharp pull. There was no answering sound.

"It certainly is stuck," admitted Ted, raising his lantern so as to get a look upwards, then he gave a yell.

"Oh! look there!"

We looked up, and saw the writhing twisting, coils of a huge carpet snake, which had wound its body round and round the bell-wire on top of the wall plate. Its head was downwards, and it did not seem at all alarmed at our presence, but went on wriggling and twisting and squirming with much apparent cheerfulness.

Ted ran back to the stables, and returned in a few seconds with a clothes-prop, with which he dealt the disturber of our peace a few rapid, but vigorous, blows, breaking its spine in several places. Then the step-



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ladder was brought out, and Ted, seizing the reptile by the tail, uncoiled it with some difficulty from the wire, and threw it down upon the verandah.

It was over nine feet in length, and very fat, and had caused all the disturbance by endeavouring to denude itself of its old skin by dragging its body between the bell-wire and the top of the wall. When Ted killed it the poor harmless creature had almost accomplished its object.

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SOUTH SEA NOTES

I

THAT many animals, particularly cattle and deer, are very fond of salt we all know, but it is not often that birds show any taste for it, or, if so, the circumstance has not generally been noted. In 1881, however, the present writer was residing on Gazelle Peninsula, the northern portion of the magnificent island of New Britain in the South Pacific, and had many opportunities of witnessing both cockatoos and wild pigeons drinking salt water. I was stationed at a place called Kabaira, the then "furthest-out" trading station on the whole island, and as I had but little to do in the way of work, I found plenty of time to study the bird-life in the vicinity. Parrots of several varieties, and all of beautiful plumage, were very plentiful, and immense flocks of white cockatoos frequented the rolling, grassy downs which lay between my home and the German head-station in Blanche Bay, twenty miles distant, while the heavy forest of the littoral was the haunt of thousands of pigeons. These latter, though not so large as the Samoan, or Eastern Polynesian

bird, formed a very agreeable change of diet for us white traders, and by walking about fifty yards from one's door, half a dozen or more could be shot in as many minutes.

My nearest neighbour was a German, and one day when we were walking along the beach towards his station, we noticed some hundreds of pigeons fly down from the forest, settle on the margin of the water, and drink with apparent enjoyment. The harbour at this spot was almost land-locked, the water as smooth as glass without the faintest ripple, and the birds were consequently enabled to drink without wetting their plumage. My companion, who had lived many years in New Britain, told me that this drinking of sea-water was common alike to both cockatoos and pigeons, and that on some occasions the beaches would be lined with them, the former birds not only drinking, but bathing as well, and apparently enjoying themselves greatly.


During the following six months, especially when the weather was calm and rainy, I frequently noticed pigeons and cockatoos come to the salt water to drink. At first I thought that as fresh water in many places bubbled up through the sand at low tide, the birds were really not drinking the sea-water, but by watching closely, I frequently saw them walk across these tiny runnels, and make no attempt to drink. Then again, the whole of the Gazette Peninsula is cut up by countless streams of water; rain falls throughout the year as a rule, and as I have said, there is always water percolating or bubbling up through the sand on the beaches at low tide. What causes this unusual habit of drinking sea-water?



Another peculiarity of the New Britain and New Ireland pigeon is its fondness for the Chili pepper-berry. During three months of the year, when these berries are ripe, the birds' crops are full of them, and very often their flesh is so pungent, and smells so strongly of the Chili, as to be quite uneatable.

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On all of the low-lying islands of the Ellice, Kingsmill and Gilbert Groups, a species of snipe are very plentiful. On the islands which enclose the noble lagoon of Funafuti in the Ellice Group, they are to be met with in great numbers, and in dull, rainy weather, an ordinarily good shot may get thirty or forty in a few hours. One day, accompanied by a native lad, I set out to collect hermit crabs, to be used as fish bait. These curious creatures are to be found almost anywhere in the equatorial islands of the Pacific; their shell houses ranging in size from a pea to an orange, and if a piece of coco-nut or fish or any other edible matter is left out overnight, hundreds of hermits will be found gathered around it in the morning. To extract the crabs from their shells, which are of all shapes and kinds, is a very simple matter—the hard casing is broken by placing them upon a large stone and striking them a sharp blow with one of lesser size. My companion and myself soon collected a heap of "hermits," when presently he took one up in his hand, and holding it close to his mouth, whistled softly. In a few moments the crab protruded one nipper, then another, then its red antennæ, and allowed the boy to take its head between his finger and thumb and draw its entire body from its shell casing.



“That is the way the *kili* (snipe) gets the *uga* (crab) from its shell,” he said. “The *kili* stands over the *uga* and whistles softly, and the *uga* puts out his head to listen. Then the bird seizes it in his bill, gives it a backward jerk and off flies the shell.”

Now I had often noticed that wherever hermit crabs were plentiful along the outer beaches of the lagoon, I was sure to find snipe, and sometimes wondered on what the birds fed. Taking up two or three “hermits” one by one, I whistled gently, and in each case the creature protruded the nippers, head and shoulders, and moved its antennæ to and fro as if pleasurably excited.

On the following day I shot three snipe, and in the stomachs of each I found some quite fresh and some partly digested hermit crabs. The thick, hard nippers are broken off by the bird before he swallows the soft, tender body.

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In a recent number of *Chambers's Journal* the present writer was much interested in a short paragraph dealing with the commercial value of the skin of the shark, and, having had many years' experience as a trader and supercargo in the South Seas, desires to add some further information on a somewhat interesting subject.

In all the equatorial islands of the North and South Pacific, shark fishing is a very profitable industry to the natives, and every trading steamer or sailing vessel coming into the ports of Sydney or Auckland from the islands of the mid-Pacific, always brings some tons of shark fins and tails and shark skins. The principal market for the former is Hong Kong, but the Chinese

merchants of the Australasian Colonies will always buy sharks' fins and tails at from 6d. to 11d. per lb., the fins bringing the best price on account of the extra amount of glutinous matter they contain, and the which are highly relished by the richer classes of Chinese as a delicacy. The tails are also valued as an article of food in China; and, apart from their edible qualities, have a further value as a base for clear varnishes, &c.; and I was informed by a Chinese tea-merchant that the glaze upon the paper coverings of tea-chests was due to a preparation composed principally of the refuse of sharks' fins, tails, and skins.

All the natives of the Gilbert, Kingsmill, and other Pacific equatorial islands are expert shark fishermen; but the wild people of Ocean Island (Paanopa) and Pleasant Island (Naura), two isolated spots just under the equator, surpass them all in the art of catching jackshark. It was the fortunate experience of the writer to live among these people for many years, and to be inducted into the native method of shark-catching. In frail canoes, made of short pieces of wood, sewn together with coco-nut fibre, the Ocean Islanders will venture out with rude but ingeniously contrived *wooden* hooks, and capture sharks of a girth (*not* length) that no untrained European would dare to attempt to kill from a well-appointed boat, with a good crew.

Shark-catching is one of *the* industries of the Pacific, and a very paying industry too. Five-and-twenty years ago there were quite a dozen or more schooners sailing out of Honolulu, in the Hawaiian Islands, to the isolated atolls of the North Pacific—notably Palmyra and



Christmas Islands—where sharks could be caught by the thousand, and the crews, who were engaged on a “lay,” like whalers, made “big money”; many of them after a six months’ cruise drawing 500 dollars—a large sum for a native sailor.

The work is certainly hard, but it is exciting, and the writer will always remember with pleasure a seven months’ shark-fishing cruise he once had in the North Pacific, the genial comrades—white men and brown—and the bag of dollars handed over to him by the owners when the ship was paid off in Honolulu.



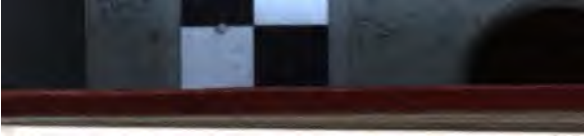
II

IT is not generally known, except to scientists and those who are acquainted with the subject, that a large percentage of the various species and varieties of sea snakes are highly venomous. These snakes must not be confounded with the very numerous species of sea eels, which, though exceedingly savage and armed with strong needle-pointed teeth, are all non-venomous, though their bite produces high inflammation if not at once properly attended to and cleansed by an antiseptic. The sea snake is a true snake in many respects, having either laminated scales or a thick corduroyed skin resembling rudimentary scales. The head is flat, and the general structure of the body similar to that of the land snake. Whether any of them possess the true poison glands and fangs I do not know, for although I have killed many hundreds of them I never took sufficient interest to make a careful examination; and I was told by a Dutch medical gentleman, long resident on the coast of Dutch New Guinea, and who had made some investigation on the subject, that he had failed to discover any poison sacs or glands in any one of the several snakes he had captured. Yet in some instances

he found what at first appeared to be the two long front teeth common to venomous land snakes, but on detailed examination these always proved to be perfectly solid; nevertheless a bite from one of these sea serpents was generally regarded by the natives as fatal; in my own experience I know of two such cases, one at the island of Fotuna in the South Pacific, and the other in Torres Straits.

In Sigavi Harbour, on Fotuna, there is a rock to which vessels occasionally make fast their stern moorings. In the boat which I sent away with a line to this rock were several boys, natives of the island, who went with the crew for amusement. One of them, aged about ten, jumped out of the boat, and in his hurry fell on his hands and knees, right on top of a large black and white banded sea snake, which at once bit him savagely on the wrist, causing the blood to flow from a score of tiny punctures. The boy at once swam on shore to be treated by a native; in the evening I heard he was suffering great agony, in the morning the poor little fellow was dead.

The second instance was near Raine Island, in Torres Straits. A stalwart young Kanaka, one of the crew of a pearling lugger, was diving for clam shells on the reef, when a snake about three feet in length suddenly shot up from below within a foot of his face. In his anger and disgust he unthinkingly struck it with his hand, and was quickly bitten on the forefinger. A few hours later he was in a high fever, accompanied with twitchings of the extremities; then tetanus ensued, followed by death in forty-eight hours.



Although these sea snakes are common to all tropical seas, they are most frequent about the Great Barrier Reef of Australia. On any smooth day they may be seen disporting themselves on the surface, or rising suddenly from the depths, erect their heads and some inches of their bodies clear from the water, gaze at the passing vessel, and then swiftly disappear. In nearly all the Pacific Islands the natives hold them in detestation and horror, and when one is seen lying coiled up on a rock sunning itself or crawling over the surface of the reef in search of food, a stone, accompanied by a curse, is always hurled at it. In the Ellice Group, when catching flying-fish at night, one (or more) of these horrid serpents is sometimes swept up in the scoop-net before it can be avoided. They range from six inches to nearly four feet in length, and all have one feature—a blunted tail-end.

Quite recently much further light has been thrown on the subject by Sir James Hector, of the Philosophical Society of Wellington, New Zealand. At one of the Society's meetings, held in April last, Sir James showed several specimens of *hybridæ*, some from Australasian Seas, others from the Atlantic. The usual habitat of sea snakes, he said, were the tropical seas generally, but some had been captured in the comparatively cold waters of the New Zealand coast, at the Catlins River. These latter were all yellow-banded; those from the islands of the Fijian Group were black-banded, and those taken from the Australian coast grey-banded. There were, he said, no fewer than seventy species, which, without exception, were fanged and provided with glands secret-

ing a virulent poison. In some of the mountainous islands of the South Pacific, such as Samoa, Fiji, &c., there were several species of land snakes, all of which were perfectly harmless, and were familiar to many people in Australia and New Zealand, through being brought there in bunches of island bananas—it was singular, he thought, that the sea snakes alone should be so highly venomous. “They were all characterised by the flattened or blunted tail, which they used as a steer oar, and were often found asleep on the surface of the water, lying on their backs. In this state they were easily and safely captured, being powerless to strike.” The present writer, who has seen hundreds of these marine snakes daily for many years, during a long residence in the Pacific Islands, cannot remember a single instance where he has seen one of these dangerous creatures asleep *on the water*, though they may frequently be found lying asleep on the coral reefs, exposing themselves to the rays of a torrid sun. They usually select some knob or rounded boulder, from the top of which, when awake, they can survey the small pools beneath and discern any fish which may be imprisoned therein. In such case they will glide down into the water with astonishing rapidity, seize their prey, and after swallowing it, return to their sun bath. The natives of the Paumotu Archipelago informed me, however, that they are most active in seeking their prey at night-time, and are especially fond of flying-fish, which, as is well known, is one of the swiftest of all ocean fishes. The sea snakes, however, seize them with the greatest ease, by rising cautiously beneath and



fastening their keen teeth in the fish's throat or belly. A snake, not two feet six inches in length, I was assured, can easily swallow a flying-fish eight inches or ten inches long.

With regard to their habit of lying asleep on their backs on the surface of the water, it may be that Sir James Hector is alluding to some particular species, but whether that is so or not Sir James's statement must of course be considered authoritative, for there is, I believe, no higher authority on the subject in the world. Apropos of these venomous marine serpents I may mention that the Rev. W. W. Gill in one of his works states that he was informed by the natives of the Cook's Group that during the prevalence of very bad weather, when fish were scarce, the large sea eels would actually crawl ashore, and ascend the *fala* (pandanus or screw-pine) trees in search of the small green lizards which live among the upper part of the foliage. At first I regarded this merely as a bit of native extravagance of statement, but in 1882, when I was shipwrecked on Peru (or Francis Island), one of the Gilbert Group, the local trader, one Frank Voliero, and myself saw one of these eels engaged in an equally extraordinary pursuit. We were one evening, after a heavy gale from the westward had been blowing for three days, examining a rookery of whale birds in search of eggs; the rookery was situated in a dense thicket scrub on the north end of the island, and was quite two hundred yards from the sea-shore, though not more than half that distance from the inside lagoon beach. The storm had destroyed quite a number

of young, half-fledged birds, whose bodies were lying on the ground, and busily engaged in devouring one of them was a very large sea eel, as thick as the calf of a man's leg. Before I could manage to secure a stick with which to kill the repulsive-looking creature, it made off through the undergrowth at a rapid pace in the direction of the lagoon, and when we emerged out into the open in pursuit, ten minutes later, we were just in time to see it wriggling down the hard, sloping beach into the water. Instinct evidently made it seek the nearest water, for none of these large sea eels are ever found in Peru Lagoon.

Many of the rivers and lakes of the islands of the Western Pacific are tenanted by eels of great size, which are never, or very seldom, as far as I could learn, interfered with by the natives, and I have never seen the people of either the Admiralty Islands, New Ireland, or New Britain touch an eel as food. The Maories, however, as is well known, are inordinately fond of eels, which, with putrid shark, constitute one of their staple articles of diet.

In the few mountainous islands of the vast Caroline Archipelago, in the North-western Pacific, eels are very plentiful, not only in the numberless small streams which debouch into the shallow waters enclosed by the barrier reefs, but also far up on the mountain-sides, occupying little rocky pools of perhaps no larger dimensions than an ordinary-sized toilet basin, or swimming up and down rivulets hardly more than two feet across. The natives of Ponapé, the largest island of the Caroline Group, and of Kusaie (Strong's



Island), its eastern outlier, regard the fresh-water eel with shuddering aversion, and should a man accidentally touch one with his foot when crossing a stream he will utter an exclamation of horror and fear. In the heathen days—down to 1845-50—the eel (*tōan*) was an object of worship, and constantly propitiated by sacrifices of food, on account of its malevolent powers; personal contact was rigidly avoided; to touch one, even by the merest accident, was to bring down the most dreadful calamities on the offender and his family—bodily deformities, starvation and poverty, and death; and although the natives of Strong's Island are now both civilised and Christianised, and a training college of the Boston Board of Missions has long been established at Port Lelé, they still manifest the same superstitious dread of the eel as in their days of heathendom. I well remember witnessing an instance of this terror during my sojourn on the island when I was shipwrecked there in 1874. I had taken up my residence in the picturesque little village of Leassé, on the western or "lee" side, when I was one evening visited by several of the ship's company—a Fijian half-caste, a white man, and two natives of Pleasant Island. At the moment they arrived I was in the house of the native pastor—a man who had received an excellent education in a missionary college at Honolulu, in the Hawaiian Islands—instructing him and his family in the art of making *taka*, or cinnet sandals, as practised by the natives of the Tokelau Group. Just then the four seamen entered, each man triumphantly holding up a large eel: in an instant there was a united howl

of horror from the parson and his family, as they made a rush for the door, overturning the lamp and nearly setting the house on fire. In vain I followed and urged them to return, and told them that the men had gone away and taken the *tōan* with them—nothing would induce them to enter the house that night, and the whole family slept elsewhere.

One singular thing about the eels on Strong's Island is that they hibernate, in a fashion, on the sides or even summits of the high mountains, at an altitude of nearly two thousand feet. Selecting, or perhaps making, a depression in the soft, moss-covered soil, the ugly creatures fit themselves into it compactly and remain there for weeks or even months at a time. I have counted as many as thirty of these holes, all tenanted, within a few square yards. Some were quite concealed by vegetable *débris* or moss, others were exposed to view, with the broad, flat head of the slippery occupant resting on the margin or doubled back upon its body. They showed no alarm, but if poked with a stick would extricate themselves and crawl slowly away.

In the streams they were very voracious, and I had a special antipathy to them, on account of their preying so on the crayfish—a crustacean of which I was particularly fond, and which the natives also liked very much, but were afraid to capture for fear their hands might come in contact with the dreaded *tōan*.

One afternoon I was plucking a pigeon I had just shot by the margin of a mountain stream. After removing the viscera, I put the bird in the water to clean it properly, and was shaking it gently to and



fro, when it was suddenly torn out of my hand by a disgustingly bloated, reddish-coloured eel about four feet in length, and quickly swallowed. That one pigeon had cost me two hours' tramping through the rain-soddened mountain forest, so loading my gun I followed the thief down stream to where the water was but a few inches deep, and then blew his head off.

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APINOKA OF APAMAMA

A FEW years ago an officer of one of her Majesty's ships, in describing his vessel's cruise through the Gilbert Islands, mentioned that the King of Apamama boarded the war-vessel, and was received with "the usual honours." Apinoka of Apamama is now dead, but in his lifetime he was a man of weight, not only in his own dominions, but would be considered so anywhere else, as he turned the scale at twenty-three stone.

Fat monarchs seem to be the rule among the equatorial islands of the Pacific. Even so far back as the days of Wallis and Cook mention is made of the immense proportions of many of the island kings and chiefs who visited their ships, and up to the present day royalty in the Pacific may, even if only clothed with a grass girdle round the waist, always be known by its superabundance of fat.

Apinoka was the most famous of all the fat potentates of the mid-Pacific isles. He died in November, 1892, and during the course of his reign considerably diminished the population of his own and the adjacent islands of the Gilbert Group; and gave a considerable amount of trouble

to the commanders of her Majesty's ships on the Australian station. Under his names of Apinoka, Tem Binoka, and Tem Baiteke, he became a terror to his neighbours, and made many warlike excursions upon the adjoining islands.

Having in Apamama Lagoon a chain of islands which produced some thousands of pounds' worth of copra annually, Apinoka spent his revenue royally, devoting, however, the greater part of his income to the purchase of deadly weapons. How far he would have gone in his career of conquest it is hard to say; but about 1890 his warlike tendencies and conquest of one of the neighbouring islands brought upon him the attention of Captain Moore, of H.M.S. *Dart*, who crushed his ambitious designs of further conquest by depriving him of a great quantity of breechloading rifles.

During his cruise through the islands of the Equatorial Pacific in the steamer *Janet Nicol*, R. L. Stevenson made the acquaintance of his Majesty of Apamama, and the novelist wrote a very interesting and charming account of his experiences. He seemed to have completely won the regard and esteem of the savage King, who was wont to express his admiration for Mr. Stevenson in language of the most vigorous kind.

Before proceeding to relate the writer's personal experience of Apinoka, a brief account of his dominions will not be out of place. Apamama is about the most important of that group of low-lying coral atolls known as the Gilbert Group, or more generally as the Line Islands. Scarcely rising to a height of more than fifteen

feet above the level of the sea, they are yet densely covered with vast groves of coco-nut palms, and support—for their size—a large population. The soil is merely a mixture of sand and decayed vegetable matter, and consequently, except for coco-nuts, the pandanus palm, and a species of coarse taro called puraka, they yield no vegetable food. Fowls and pigs are the only animal food to be obtained, but the lagoons and the ocean outside yield an abundance of fish. Yet poor as is their land, the Line Islanders are hardy and vigorous, and are without doubt the most warlike and intractable of all those inhabiting similarly formed islands in the Pacific; except perhaps the people of the Paumotu or Dangerous Archipelago, far to the south-east.

In March 1882, the writer was cast away in a trading vessel on Peru (one of the Line Islands), and after a detention of about three months, was taken off the island by a fine three-masted schooner belonging to a Sydney Chinese trading firm, and named the *George Noble*. After leaving Peru, we proceeded northward, and then headed back to cruise through the southern islands of the group. Our captain was anxious to get into Apamama Lagoon as quickly as possible, where he had been promised the right of purchase of fifty tons of copra by King Apinoka. Calms and strong westerly currents had greatly delayed and irritated him, and he expressed the opinion that if he did not get into the lagoon by the end of August the King would not sell him the copra, but dispose of it to Californian or German trading schooners.

However, we did get in at last, and dropped anchor

in the noble lagoon about a mile off the shore and directly in front of the King's residence. The schooner had scarce swung to her anchor when a boat manned by natives came alongside. The steersman, a truculent-looking fellow with a cast in his right eye and a villainous mouth, was the King's major-domo, and told the captain that his master had been expecting the ship for a long time, and was coming aboard at four o'clock.

And at four o'clock his Majesty came alongside in a slashing whaleboat. The coxswain was the scoundrelly looking major-domo before mentioned; the crew consisted of handsome young women—ten in number—who were members of Apinoka's numerous harem.

Now, although I had visited Apamama ten years before, I had not seen Apinoka, who was on that occasion away at one of his dependencies, a small island named Kuria, situated to the leeward of Apamama. Naturally enough, I was anxious to see the man who in his own little way was the Napoleon of the Equatorial Pacific.

Our mate went and looked at the gangway ladder to see that everything was all safe for the royal ascent, and, the boat having ranged alongside, King Apinoka ascended the ladder, and was met at the gangway by the skipper.

He was about the biggest Polynesian I had ever seen, and although not very tall, was of immense girth. He was dressed in a suit of black cloth, and wore a white helmet-hat, white canvas shoes, and had a network of heavy gold watchchains across his huge paunch. In complexion he was a dark-reddish bronze, and his

aquiline features, personal resemblance to and manner of speech, irresistibly recalled to mind a description I had read of his Majesty George IV.

"How are you, King?" said our captain, shaking hands with our visitor.

"Me? Oh, me all right," was the answer, in fat, wheezy tones, as if the monarch's internal anatomy was lined with cotton-wool; and then he gave a snorting, grunting sound intended for a laugh.

"Come below, King," said the captain affably.

With some difficulty Apinoka Rex squeezed himself down through the companion, and, no chair being large enough to accommodate his elephantine carcass, he sat on the transom lockers.

"What'll you have to drink, King?" queried the captain, with a glance at the steward, who stood by ready.

"Me? Oh, I like some champagne—I like big bottle with dash brandy."

The skipper nodded pleasantly. (Apinoka always asked for champagne, not because he liked it, but because he thought it was the correct thing to do, and was, besides, a good method of testing any trading captain's liberality by asking for it. If he was told there was none on board he would not hesitate to express his opinion of the ship's meanness in the matter of drink, and perhaps get up and go ashore immediately.)

However, Captain Evers knew his man. A bottle of fizz was brought up, with half a tumblerful of brandy.

"What will the ladies take, King?" said the captain,

as some half a dozen of the monarch's boat's crew filed into the cabin and sat down on the cabin deck.

"Oh, him" (meaning they) "be d——; give them some gin and some cakes."

The fizz was opened and poured out into a big tumbler. Apinoka, holding it in his right hand, looked at the captain, and then said, with a wheezy laugh—

"Here luck, Captain. I say, Captain, I bin wait long time for you. What the —— you no come quick? Eh?"

"Too much calm, King. For nearly five weeks nothing but calms and strong westerly currents."

The monarch drained a huge tumblerful of the liquor down at one gulp, and then, flinging his glass carelessly down so that it rolled off the table on to the floor, looked at the captain full in the face.

"By ——, you lie! Plenty wind here at Apamama. Blow like —— sometimes."

The captain had come to trade. "No lie, King. Do you think I would tell you a lie?"

"Yes," said his Majesty cheerfully. "All you Dutchmen lie!"

(The King knew that our captain was a German, and never failed to remind him that his nationality was a serious handicap to him.)

The skipper laughed good-naturedly, and told the steward to bring another bottle of champagne.

"No," said the King energetically. "I want no more champagne. Glass of gin, please."

He took a good second mate's nip, and then began to talk business. Presently he began to tell us, with

many a wheezy laugh and grunting snort, that he had sacked his American secretary.

"What for, King?" said the skipper.

"Oh, he" (many violent epithets omitted) "— rogue! I pay him well; he cheat me like —!"

"How are you getting on with the American missionaries?" asked the captain.

The huge mountain of flesh winked one eye and laughed, and then told us how he had, after long discussion with the principal of the Boston Board of Missions, permitted two Hawaiian teachers to land at Apamama, and instruct six of his young men how to read, write, and "count up figures," and had then sent them away in the mission-ship *Morning Star*, with a threat of instant death if they ever dared to return again.

"What did you send them away for?" asked the captain, who knew the story well.

Because, he said, he had now six men who could read and write and tell him when he was being cheated by trading captains.

Then with another hoarse laugh like the bellow of a fog-horn, he slapped Captain Evers on the back, and asked him if he had any rifles to sell.

"No," said the captain; "but this gentleman," pointing to the writer, "has got a fine breechloading shot-gun which he might sell you. He has been wrecked on Peru, and is going to Sydney with me, and can buy another gun there."

"How are you?" said Apinoka, stretching out a fat paw to me. "Show me the gun."

I showed it. He bought it, and paid me a good price for it in English gold. Then the monarch got up, and peered into my cabin to see if there was anything else he could buy.

It so happened that among the few things I had saved from the wreck was a spring balance scale weighing up to 200 lb. I had brightened and polished up the brass disc so that it looked like new. It caught the royal eye at once, and he asked me to let him look at it. At the same moment the skipper handed me a slip of paper.

“You let him have the gun too cheap. He told me you are a fool. Make him pay for the spring balance.”

I crumpled up the note, and then held out my hand for the spring balance.

“Me want buy him,” said the King. “How much you want?”

“Fifty dollars,” I said promptly, meaning to take ten.

“By —, you all same dam Jew,” said the King, taking up his bag of money from the cabin table, and counting me out ten sovereigns.

“King,” I said with dignity, “if you don’t like paying for it, don’t take it.”

He hit me playfully in the stomach, and said, “All right; never mind. You say fifty dollar, I say all right. My business, eh?”

This was certainly correct. Presently Apinoka drew the captain aside, and asked him if I would be willing to remain ashore at Apamama, and take up the vacant office of secretary. If I was a good man he would pay

me seventy-five dollars a month, give me a house, and provide me with a wife who could make bread.

The captain called me over, and the King repeated his offer. I explained that I had to go to Sydney, and could not accept.

"All right; never mind," said the monarch affably. "Suppose you like to be a fool, that no business of mine, eh! What do you think, captain?"

He remained on board an hour or two, and spent some 500 dollars in various articles, and then arranged to sell the captain all his copra.

Just before he rose to go, Captain Evers said to him, pointing to the section of the kingly harem squatted on the cabin deck—

"Where is that young wife of yours, King Apinoka; that girl that I saw last time? She was a Tarawa girl, you said, and her name was Ne Tiratiko."

The moment the name left the captain's lips the women bent their eyes to the deck in a timid, frightened manner, and the King, with a scowling glance at the captain, rose and snorted and puffed up the companionway, without even saying farewell.

"You've hurt his feelin's," said a white trader, who was a passenger with us. "Ne Tiratiko was one of his favourite wives; but a yarn came along one day that she was seen speaking to a young fellow who was one of the King's fishermen. The next day they were both dead."

"Killed them?" queried the captain.

"You bet! The man was brought before the King early in the morning, and Apinoka emptied a six-

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